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NEW TESLA vs SKODA



**Model Y: believe the hype,
it's better than the best**



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WILL RETURN
TO GLORY**

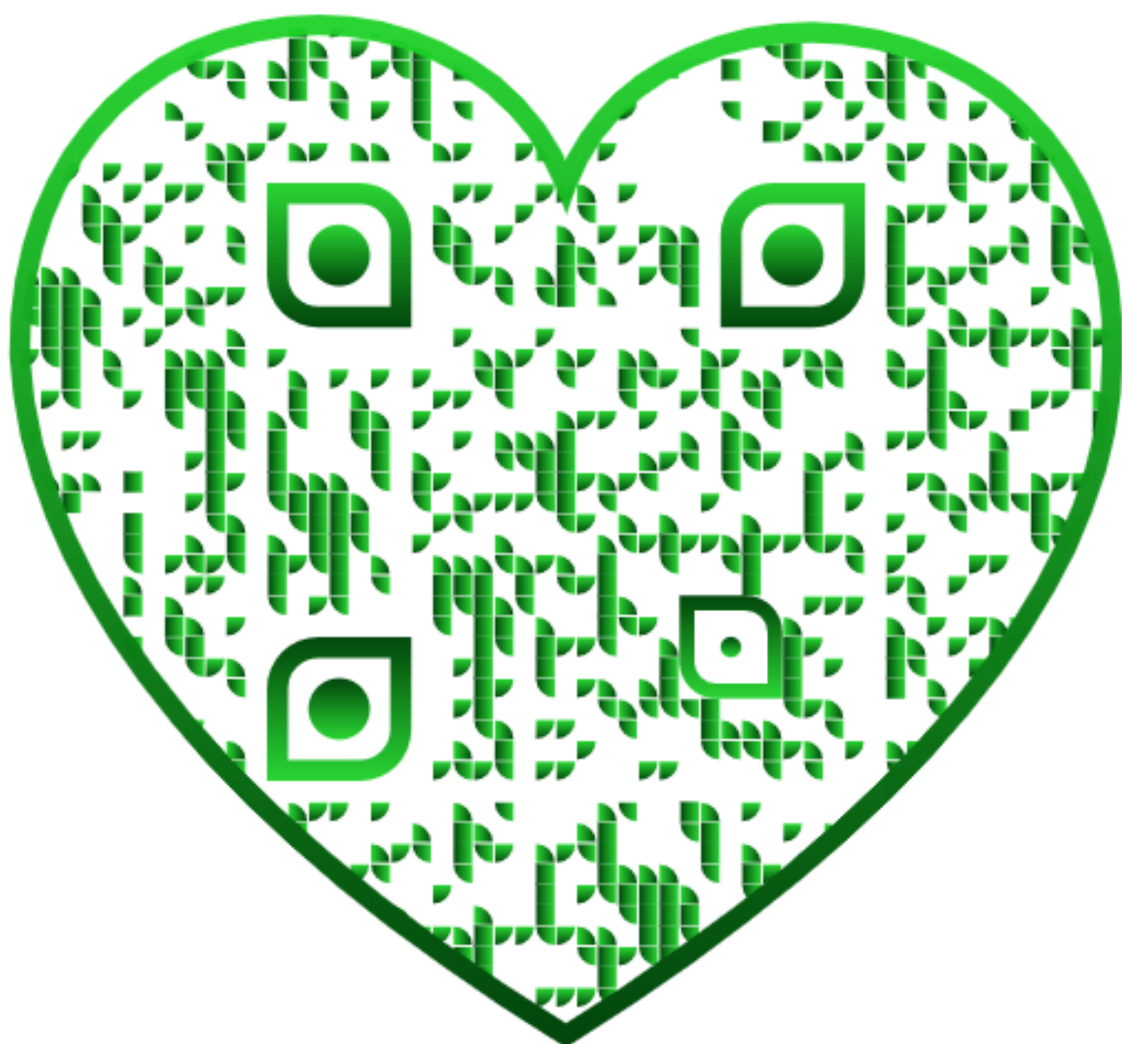
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MEET THE ALL-ELECTRIC MINI FAMILY

With the all-electric Cooper, Aceman and Countryman, MINI now has a lineup of exciting battery-powered models to suit families of all shapes and sizes.

A lot has changed since the Classic Mini burst onto the scene in 1959. While the Classic was something of a stand-out maverick – a lone wolf that redefined fun, practical motoring – the MINI lineup has since matured into a proper, grown-up family. And that's great news, because it means there's now a MINI for everyone, complete with the punchy performance and generous range of MINI's new electric powertrains. But don't think for a second that it's lost what made the Classic Mini so iconic. The laugh-out-loud go-kart handling, the impressive technical innovation, and ultimate feel-good factor are all present and correct. That signature MINI DNA permeates every aspect of this new electric generation. So which is the MINI for you? It's time to meet the family.



MINI COUNTRYMAN

This latest all-electric Countryman brings a new level of space and practicality to the MINI range. It's much larger than its predecessor – which means a delightfully roomy, plush interior. There's also a sizeable 460-litre boot that increases to a cavernous 1,450 litres with the rear seats down, so you won't be short on cargo space. The electric powertrains bring impressive instant acceleration, with the 308bhp ALL4 version capable of surging to 62mph in just 5.6 seconds, while the Countryman E has a long range of up to 287 miles between charges.



MINI ACEMAN

The Aceman is MINI's first dedicated electric model. Its compact SUV proportions offer space for five on the inside, while maintaining city-friendly dimensions that make it a joy to drive and park in town. Its agile handling and nippy acceleration are bound to put a smile on your face. Inside, the luxurious interior is packed with impressive technology – such as a world-first circular OLED screen – and is decked in fancy sustainable materials that add to the premium ambience. It's a car that perfectly bridges the gap between the Cooper and Countryman.



MINI COOPER

The Cooper might just be the ultimate small electric car. Perfect for zipping through town, sensationally simple to park, and a breeze on a motorway a blast. With up to 215bhp the Cooper serves up zingy performance with super-fun go-kart handling to leave you smiling from ear-to-ear. The pleasingly minimalist interior adds to the sense of space, and the use of innovative 2D knit textiles and Vescin vegan leather enhance the upmarket atmosphere, while cutting-edge connected technology means it always knows the quickest routes that avoid city jams.



SCAN HERE

TO DISCOVER THE ALL-ELECTRIC MINI FAMILY
AND BOOK YOUR TEST DRIVE TODAY

COMMENT

AMONG VOLUME EV FIRMS, THE ORIGINAL IS STILL BEST



You've been living under a rock if you've missed the recent controversies surrounding Elon Musk and, by association, Tesla. But however you feel about Musk and his political leanings, the marque is still churning out commendable EVs, as this week's cover story shows.

When Tesla first arrived on the scene with its Model S and later on with the Model 3, it demonstrated how far ahead of traditional manufacturers it was with electric vehicles. Tesla had a huge advantage – one that CEOs around the world acknowledged, openly celebrating Musk as a visionary. The mainstream players knew they had to play catch-up.

Since then, car makers have had to respond remarkably quickly to the need for EVs, investing billions in the pursuit. The result is many creditable EVs from almost every automotive brand on the planet.

So has Tesla lost its edge now? It's a very thin line but this week's twin test pitting the Model Y against the Skoda Enyaq (p42) shows, after all this time and with ongoing development, Tesla is still able to maintain its lead over established rivals.

It's small differences but collectively it shouldn't be underplayed: charging network, competitive PCP prices, battery technology and impressive efficiency all make the Model Y stand out. Don't write Tesla off just yet.

Rachel Burgess, magazine editor
rachel.burgess@haymarket.com

"Would I like to take a break? No, but I might like to steer off that cliff" p39



AUTOCAR

Issue 6672 | Volume 324 | No 11

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42 UPDATED TESLA BATTLES LATEST SKODA

Meanwhile, online...

autocar.co.uk



New Vantage Roadster

Join Richard Lane to see if this £181,500 super-convertible ranks among the most charismatic Astons of the modern era.



The most powerful American engines ever

No replacement for displacement, so the cliché went. These hugely potent US engines show why.



Track test of 4WD Alpine

Iliya Verpraet heads to a wet test track to sample a prototype version of the new Alpine A390 EV ahead of its imminent debut.



Autocar (ISSN 1355-8293 USPS 25-185) is published weekly by Haymarket Media Group, Bridge House, 69 London Road, Twickenham, TW1 3SP, United Kingdom; haymarket.com; tel +44 (0)20 8267 5000

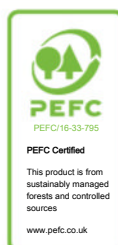
The US annual subscription price is \$190.00. Airfreight and mailing in the US by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. US postmaster: Send address changes to Autocar, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at the above address. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

Autocar magazine is also published in Estonia, Greece, India, Japan, Latvia, Korea and Thailand.

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NEWS

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NISSAN GOES AFTER YOUNG BUYERS FOR NEW MICRA EV

Brand aims to shed 'grandma car' image with upmarket Renault 5 twin

The radically different new sixth-generation Nissan Micra has been created to appeal to younger, European buyers, in a bid to move the supermini away from being known as a "grandma car".

The newest generation of the popular hatchback – which has amassed more than six million sales since first being launched 42 years ago – has been fully revealed by the Japanese firm as a twin to Alliance partner Renault's electric 5. This means it won't be sold with a combustion engine for the first time in its history.

The Micra is aimed squarely at buyers in Europe, a market in which Nissan is looking to grow after suffering heavy losses in recent years,

necessitating a major cost-cutting plan (see box, right).

It arrives as one of four new Nissan EVs due before the end of 2026, the others being the new Leaf crossover, an electric Juke and an A-segment model that will be twinned with the upcoming Renault Twingo.

The new Micra sits on the Ampr Small platform, drawing power from either a 40kWh or a 52kWh battery, which are good for 192 and 253 miles of range. In top-spec form, the battery can accept a charging rate of 100kW to go from 15–80% in 30 minutes.

As with the 5, alongside which the Micra will be produced by Renault in Douai, France, power is sent to a single, front-mounted motor that can be tuned

for 121bhp (with the 40kWh battery) or 148bhp (with the 52kWh battery).

Beyond the electric powertrain, the biggest change for the Micra is its radical new design. While it was developed alongside the 5 from the start, Nissan designers were given the freedom to

create something that "was more noticeably Nissan" – although "we had to fight for it", exterior design manager Yongwook Cho told Autocar.

Described as "audacious, assertive and funky", the new look takes inspiration from the bulbous Mk3 Micra of 2002, especially for its circular daytime-running

lights at both ends.

Cho added that "it was tough" when his designers were tasked with creating something that would differ visually from the "already good-looking" 5, especially given the fixed underpinnings.

One change from the 5 is at the front, where the bonnet is higher, longer and features slightly more bulky arches in order to give the Micra a different silhouette.

"We wanted to carry more volume to the front," said Cho, who added that this gives the Micra more of a crossover feel – like the Renault Megane – than the 5, which is more overtly a hatchback and "sporty".

Another differentiator is at the rear, where a lip was added, and at the side

OFFICIAL PICTURES



Crossover shapes and the Mk3 Micra inspired the new look



"I'm very happy with this design," marketing boss Charpentier tells Rimell



Slim, horizontal headlights sit within circular running lights

which is gender-neutral".

Charpentier continued: "The challenge is really to rejuvenate, because we know that in the UK we have this [grandma] association, and we believe through the audacious and playful design that we see, it's going to help conquer new types of buyers, like younger, modern parents."

Asked whether sales could be affected by the Micra's switch to electric-

only power, he said: "We will have to explain that it's an EV, a full EV. It had to be explained by Renault with the 5. So that's the fact."

Touching on the 5's popularity (16,948 sales in Europe so far this year) and lower starting price, Charpentier disagreed that total electrification would inhibit uptake of the Micra.

"We have a very strong nameplate," he said. "I'm sure that the nameplate

of Micra is stronger in the UK, for example, than the 5. Probably also in Italy. So I'm not worried about this."

What's more, Charpentier believes that the arrivals of the reinvented Leaf and the next-generation Juke will help rejuvenate Nissan during a turbulent period for the company.

"This new EV line-up will help us to come back in the race," he predicted.

WILL RIMELL

"The bigger battery is good for 253 miles and the motor can be tuned for 148bhp"



Interior layout and tech come straight from the Renault 5

(visually where the twins are most obviously related), where there's a shoulder line that looks "like it's been scooped by a gelato scoop".

These design elements combine to make the Micra "a grandma car no more", claimed Cho.

The interior is essentially identical to the 5's, with the same twin 10.25in screens, same switchgear and same materials, but its colour offerings – white, grey and black – are more muted.

That is intended to position Nissan's entry-level EV as more of a premium offering than the 5, European marketing boss Arnaud Charpentier told Autocar. Pricing, he suggested, would therefore start above Renault's £22,995 entry point.

Explaining why Nissan had given the Micra such a radical styling overhaul, Charpentier said: "The UK is our best market in Europe by far [with 133,000 sales since the start of 2024], so we had to come back with something different."

"I think this new car will create a gap between what people have in mind when they look or think of the [Micra] nameplate and what is now the reality."

"Young buyers? That was the objective."

Charpentier said traditional Micra buyers in the UK differ from those in other markets. For example, in France and Spain they are younger and "almost 95% female". As such, he explained, "we wanted to come back with something

NISSAN INTENSIFIES COST-CUTTING EFFORTS

Nissan is to cut 20,000 jobs, close seven factories and freeze all post-2026 product work as part of an expanded global restructure aimed at reducing annual costs by £1.3 billion by 2027.

This builds on the Japanese company's February announcement that it would reduce its workforce by 9000, close



three plants and slash production by 20% (to five million vehicles per year).

The new announcement includes those previously disclosed plans, said Nissan, and came as the company confirmed a £3.8bn net loss in the 2024-25 financial year.

New Nissan president and CEO Ivan Espinosa attributed the heavy losses to "rising variable costs, compounded by an uncertain environment", adding that this new "prudent approach" has the aim of "returning to profitability by fiscal year 2026".

To that end, Nissan will reduce its 133,580-strong

workforce by 20,000 and close seven factories by April 2027. It previously confirmed to Autocar that Sunderland was safe from closure.

In addition, all post-2026 product work has been temporarily shelved.

However, speaking to Autocar, European marketing boss Arnaud Charpentier said that the decision doesn't affect the incoming A-segment EV, twinned with the new Renault Twingo.

"We continue to develop the product, the line-up," he said. "No big project or big product development has been cut. That would be a big mistake."

DS 4 HEADS UPMARKET TO REIGNITE FLAGGING SALES

Rebranded as N°4, the new-look hatch gains an EV alongside its hybrids

The DS 4 has been given a heavy mid-life revamp that ushers in a fresh look, a new name

and the option of an electric powertrain for the first time.

The second-generation family hatchback has been

the French brand's best-seller in the UK since its 2021 launch, albeit with just 2300 sales in total.

Even though the 4 has done much better for DS in mainland Europe, amassing 10,405 sales in 2024, the manufacturer is struggling after overall deliveries tumbled 22.4% last year.

The downward trend is most prominent in the UK, where a stagnating DS has amassed fewer sales since 2023 (4000 units) than it achieved in 2019 alone.

Such is its plight that reports suggested parent Stellantis was ready to offload the firm last year. Instead, though, Stellantis

has publicly backed the French car maker and, in a bid to rejuvenate the brand, DS unveiled the new N°8 flagship SUV in December last year and has now given its best-selling model a wide-reaching update.

The changes to the family hatch include rebranding it as N°4 – a move that follows the naming strategy introduced with the N°8, which is part of the efforts to establish DS in the premium sphere.

The addition of a pure-electric version for the first

"A single motor sends 210bhp to the front wheels"



Main change inside the N°4 is a new 10.25in instrument display

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Along with aping the N°8 name, the N°4 gains a similar style of front end

time should also help to give the model extra appeal – especially in the UK, where manufacturers are pressed to sell an increasing number of EVs.

Sharing the same electric powertrain set-up with the similarly sized Peugeot e-408 and facelifted Citroën ë-C4, the N°4 E-Tense is fitted with a 58.3kWh (usable capacity) battery that provides up to 280 miles of range.

Power is supplied to a single electric motor that sends 210bhp and 253lb ft to the front wheels. A 0-62mph time has yet to be confirmed, but the e-408 achieves the sprint in 7.6sec.

Like its Peugeot sibling, the new DS can rapid-charge at speeds of up to 120kW, enabling a 62-mile top-up in 11 minutes.

The N°4 is offered with a plug-in hybrid set-up as before, but it gains a more efficient and larger 14.6kWh battery. This provides up to 50 miles of engine-off



LED tail-lights are new; it has 19in wheels, with 20in offered as an option

range, 30% more than the car it replaces. The system combines a 178bhp turbocharged four-pot with a gearbox-integrated motor for 222bhp and 266lb ft.

The previous car's petrol mild hybrid is also offered.

DS has transformed the look of the new N°4, bringing it into line with that of the N°8. Its nose now features a wider, redesigned grille, as well as the same V-shaped light signature as the SUV. The bonnet has also been extended by 12mm. At the

rear, new LED lights feature.

In keeping with its push to appeal as a premium option, 19in wheels are standard, with 20in alloys available at extra cost.

Inside, the cabin has been subtly revised. The main change is the fitment of a new 10.25in instrument cluster.

The N°4 will go on sale this summer. Pricing has yet to be confirmed, but it is likely to be an increase on today's £33,235 starting price.

WILL RIMELL

PRICE DROP FOR E-TRON GT

The Audi E-tron GT has a new entry-level variant priced from £88,555. Called the E-tron GT Quattro, it offers 577bhp and a range of up to 387 miles from a 97kWh battery. Black accents distinguish it from the S and RS models. First deliveries are scheduled for August.



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OFFICIAL PICTURES



NEW 500 HYBRID SHOWS ITS FACE – AND ITS MANUAL 'BOX

FIAT HAS RELEASED the first images of the new 500 Hybrid, which reveal that it will get an overhauled interior and a six-speed manual gearbox.

Photographs of a group of pre-production prototypes show that it will be visually identical to the electric 500e except for a reworked front grille to feed air to a petrol engine.

Inside, the dashboard

features a larger and squarer new storage cubby and the gearlever is elevated alongside the steering wheel.

Fiat has yet to confirm which powertrain the 500 Hybrid will use, but it's expected to employ the same 1.0-litre three-cylinder mild-hybrid Firefly unit that featured in the previous 500.

The presence of a

manual gearbox rules out the 1.2-litre three-cylinder mild-hybrid Puretech engine used in a wide range of models under the Stellantis corporate umbrella, such as the new Fiat Grande Panda.

Production of the 500 Hybrid will begin in the fourth quarter of this year, which is earlier than the 2026 deadline previously set by Fiat.



CLA SHOOTING BRAKE EV SET FOR SEPTEMBER DEBUT

MERCEDES IS RAMPING up testing of its new CLA Shooting Brake.

Expected to make its debut at the Munich motor show in September, the CLA wagon will, like the saloon, arrive first in

electric form, with a petrol version following later this year.

At launch, it will have the same 85kWh battery as the standard CLA but, given its bulkier body, isn't expected to match its 484 miles of range.

SPY SHOTS



CLA wagon will arrive as an EV first; petrol variant will follow later this year



AUTOCAR
IMAGE

MAINSTREAM 7 WILL BE A 'PROPER POLESTAR'

New crossover to retain brand's sporting focus in pursuit of volume sales

The forthcoming Polestar 7, the brand's first mass-market model, is set to be a far bigger seller than any of its current line-up but will retain the premium billing and dynamic credentials of those cars.

The Europe-made,

Europe-focused crossover will arrive in 2027 and is being primed as the catalyst behind a significant growth in sales for the Swedish car maker.

Polestar has not yet said whether it will use its own architecture for the 7 or adapt a platform from the

wider Geely group, as it has done with each of its current models. Either way, CEO Michael Lohscheller was keen to emphasise the firm's commitment to ensuring the new 7 looks, drives and feels like an authentic Polestar.

Asked if he had any

concerns about a more mainstream model diluting Polestar's premium positioning, Lohscheller said: "No, because we'll make sure we get the Polestar DNA right into it. That's the key task of our R&D teams: to make sure that Polestar DNA, in

terms of chassis tuning, behaviour, look and feel, comes in, and it behaves totally like a Polestar."

Citing the stark differences between the Polestar 3 and the closely related Volvo EX90 as an example of how two cars that share a platform



Renault's boss says the UK market is "important" for the fourth-gen Twingo

NEW TWINGO SET FOR UK SALES

THE NEW RENAULT Twingo electric city car will come to the UK in right-hand-drive form soon after its launch next year, the firm's boss Fabrice Cambolive has confirmed.

The fourth-generation Twingo is due on sale in Europe next year with a sub-€20,000 (£16,700) entry price, but there had been doubts over whether

it would come to the UK due to the cost of converting the model for right-hand-drive markets. The uncertainty had echoes of the original 1990s Twingo, which was tipped to reach the UK but never officially did.

But Cambolive has said the model will come to the UK, citing the strong positive reception of the Renault 5 and 4 as a key factor.

The new 7 could share its basic architecture with other Geely group models



“The 7 will have a dynamic character in line with Polestar’s sporting billing”

can still be obviously differentiated models, Lohscheller said: “If you take the Polestar 3 and the EX90, I would argue it’s executed very well. The Volvo is comfort and safety, nice and easy for the commute; the Polestar is a performance car – you feel it in how it drives. The suspension is different, the

chassis tuning is different.” The comparison suggests that while the Polestar 7 might be similar in size and closely related to sibling models from Volvo, Zeekr or Lotus, for example, it will be engineered to have a markedly distinct dynamic character that’s in line with Polestar’s sporting billing.

The 7 will also be

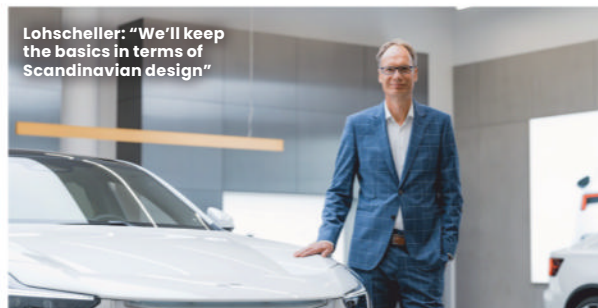
distinguished by an evolved design language that Lohscheller says will be rolled out to all Polestar models to make them “more confident” and better show off their performance potential.

“Design is of the highest importance,” he added. “[The 7] needs to have a very compelling design,

“The UK is important in terms of product recognition, because your legacy in terms of cars is important,” he said. “I’ve followed closely the reaction [in the UK] to the R5 and R4, and with Twingo the exercise will be even more interesting because it’s not only sportiness, agility, design and practicality, but also we can play on versatility.

“The Twingo can be one of the solutions of mobility for the UK tomorrow.”

Lohscheller: “We’ll keep the basics in terms of Scandinavian design”



obviously in the Polestar style. Maybe a bit more confidence going forward, and the performance element is also super-important.”

Lohscheller also said a defining tenet of this new treatment – as being defined by new head of design Philipp Römers – will be making the cars “less minimalistic”. But he stressed that the brand will not seek to completely overhaul its styling cues, so the 7 will be recognisable as a sibling of the 2, 3 and 4.

“I wouldn’t say different,” Lohscheller said of the new look. “Design is always evolving. It will develop, especially with a new head of design, but I would say we’ll keep the basics in

terms of Scandinavian design, but I want to have a bit more confidence.”

Lohscheller stopped short of confirming whether this new design approach means the Polestar line-up will be available in a broader and brighter spread of colour options than those currently offered.

Polestar has already announced the 7 will be built in Europe; Lohscheller said a precise location will be confirmed in the coming weeks. Volvo’s Ghent factory in Belgium is one candidate, but that will soon be supplemented by a new Volvo plant in Slovakia, which could also accommodate some Polestar production.

FELIX PAGE

POLESTAR BAITs TAYCAN WITH 900BHP 5

Polestar will reveal the production version of the 5 super-saloon at the Munich motor show in September. With an 800V architecture for “extreme fast-charging”, nearly 900bhp and “supercar levels” of stiffness from its Brit-engineered chassis, it will take on the Porsche Taycan and Mercedes-AMG’s upcoming EV GT in 2026.



DEFENDER LIFTS JLR PROFITS

JLR posted pre-tax profits of £2.5 billion in the 12 months to the end of March, its highest recorded in 10 years.

For the 2024–25 financial year, the British company generated £29bn in revenues and its best profit in a decade, despite “global economic challenges”.

Record sales for the best-selling Defender (left) played a significant part (115,404 sold, up 9.7%), as did the Range Rover Sport (79,862 sold, up 18.7%) and the larger Range Rover (77,000 sold, up 8.9%).

Sales of the smaller Discovery Sport and Evoque were up 9.3% and 26.7% respectively, but the older Discovery – in its eighth year in showrooms – declined 5.8%.

Jaguar sales nearly halved (to 26,862) as JLR wound down production in preparation for its bold new electric era. That will begin next year with the production version of the Type 00 concept – for which 32,000 people are said to have ‘expressed interest’.



RENAULT, STELLANTIS BOSSES FIGHT TO SAVE SMALL CARS

De Meo and Elkann call on the EU to adopt a new CO₂ life-cycle policy

Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo and Stellantis chairman John Elkann have called on European politicians to reverse the mandated switch to pure-electric powertrains and devise a more flexible strategy that allows manufacturers to keep producing small, affordable cars.

In a rare joint interview at the Financial Times Future of the Car summit, the bosses of the two rival firms rallied against the EU's and UK's 2035 deadlines for combustion car sales. They said the decarbonisation of the automotive industry is contingent on a more flexible approach rather than a framework of "deadlines and fines", which

ultimately makes cars more expensive for the consumer.

De Meo said: "We are here to fight for the idea that small cars still have a purpose and could be one of the ways to reboot the automotive market in Europe."

"The battle of the industry is to reduce the impact of transport. The obvious thing is to produce cars that have an overall lower impact. This is the case for small cars."

Elkann – leader of the Stellantis group that owns Peugeot, Citroën and Fiat among others – said the two rival firms are united by their heritage in small cars and their shared objective of continuing to offer affordable personal mobility: "Our roots are



Elkann: roots in small cars

in small cars that were really the driving force of prosperity in the countries in Europe where we belong – and the great access that those cases gave to many people to be able to enjoy the freedom of cars.

"We believe, with Luca, that 2025 is a year when European countries and

the European Union need to decide if that's still relevant in the 21st century."

Ultimately, the pair suggest, European legislators should approach the decarbonisation of the car parc in a more holistic way, rather than mandating that every car should be zero-emission at the tailpipe by 2035.

This is particularly true in the context of small, affordable cars, which become inherently more expensive, and thereby less attainable, when fitted with battery-electric powertrains.

The solution, as proposed by de Meo and Elkann, is to introduce legislation that allows for the production and sale of lower-emission,

rather than zero-emission, small cars in the short to medium term. That would mean the price hike that comes with electrification would be more gradual, and thus it would more quickly reduce the CO₂ output of Europe's car parc.

According to de Meo, over the course of 124,000 miles (a reasonable life cycle for a modern car), the average ICE car in Europe produces 60,000kg of CO₂, compared with 20 tonnes of CO₂ for an EV – "a third as much, but still not zero".

Meanwhile, a range-extender or plug-in hybrid alternative – which would be priced somewhere between the two – would emit 30,000kg of CO₂ over the same mileage. In short,

"We truly believe this opportunity is good for the overall environment"

HOT MOKKA ON ITS WAY

A potent new Mokka GSe is being readied, as Vauxhall transitions the sub-brand to EVs. Details have yet to be confirmed, but the GSe will most likely borrow hardware from its 278bhp Abarth 600e cousin.



208 DUCKS UNDER £20K

The Peugeot 208's new entry-level Style trim drops the hatch's starting price to £19,995. It's offered with a 99bhp 1.2-litre three-pot turbo petrol, six-speed manual gearbox, cloth seats and steel wheels.





De Meo: give car makers freedom

it would halve the CO₂ output of an ICE car while commanding less of a price premium than a pure-electric alternative. "We are advocating for changing the 'tailpipe approach' to a CO₂ life-cycle one," said de Meo.

He added that achieving this shift in mindset – and regulation – would require a "very, very pragmatic" approach from industry and politicians. "We need to talk about strategy," he continued. "We need to put our engineers on the right tracks that can create a competitive advantage for the European industry."

Elkann added: "We truly believe that this opportunity is not only good for the overall environment, but it's good for people who want to buy cars. These cars are too expensive, fundamentally driven by regulations that have made them expensive."

De Meo said that in 2030, a medium-sized Renault car will have increased in cost by 20% compared with 2015. "In the case of small cars," he said, "it's 40%."

To counter this, car makers must be given the freedom to continue producing small, cheap cars without risking heavy fines or a dramatic drop in sales that's tied to a drop in EV demand or a lack of appetite for small, expensive electric cars.

"If we have less regulation, we can make sure that we build cars that are less expensive and so they'll be more affordable," he said.

FELIX PAGE

New ID 2's LFP battery will be more efficient and cheaper to produce



ID 2 FIRST IN QUEUE FOR VW'S NEXT-GEN BATTERY TECH

Volkswagen will start moving all of its electric cars onto an updated platform from next year as it ushers in a new type of battery chemistry that promises to reduce costs.

The Volkswagen ID 2 supermini will be the first model to use a new lithium-iron-phosphate (LFP) battery that will be cheaper to produce than the nickel-manganese-cobalt (NMC) packs used by the firm's current EVs.

After that, the rest of VW's ID cars will move to an updated platform, dubbed MEB Plus, which will allow them to adopt

the same type of battery.

LFP batteries have become more popular as recent technological developments have increased their range while preserving their cost advantage over conventional NMC packs. Tesla was first to bring the technology to mass-production models, followed by Ford.

Speaking about the new underpinnings, Volkswagen CEO Thomas Schäfer said: "That will be a major step forward in terms of cost for us. It's very important, also in performance."

The LFP batteries will be supplied by the Volkswagen Group's new battery factory in Salzgitter, Germany, where the current-generation NMC packs will also be built on a smaller scale until they are phased out.

The company has yet to confirm specifications, but it is possible that EVs could gain range while reducing in price.

As previously reported by Autocar, this technological overhaul will be accompanied by a wide-reaching design refresh of Volkswagen's ID electric vehicle line-up.

VW LINES UP 'MIND-BLOWING' ELECTRIC GTI

Volkswagen is preparing to expand the GTI performance brand across multiple model lines in the electric era, and company CEO Thomas Schäfer says the

hot new models will be "mind-blowing" to drive.

The manufacturer is preparing to take GTI electric in 2026 with the production version of the ID GTI concept, which will become the hot range-topping variant of the ID 2 supermini.

A potent version of the electric ninth-generation Golf will follow by the end of the decade. According to Schäfer, these two cars will start "a whole group" of GTI models due to be rolled out

in the coming years across Volkswagen's electric line-up.

"Can you make an electric Golf exciting?" said Schäfer. "Absolutely. We have driven a few prototypes that we have built on the new set-up, and it is mind-blowing."

While it will be a few years before VW shows a production-ready electric Golf GTI, Schäfer said his experience of the prototypes suggests the next GTI will be "a monster car".



RUGGED BZ4X REVEALED

Toyota has unveiled a stretched, off-road-focused variant of its bZ4X electric SUV. The 140mm-longer bZ4X Touring has a 600-litre boot, a 338bhp dual-motor set-up and a host of rugged design tweaks.



BYD TARGETS PHEV RIVALS

The BYD Seal 06 plug-in hybrid is due in the UK in the coming months, as a rival to the BMW 330e and Skoda Octavia iV. In China, it is available as a saloon or estate, with an approximate EV range of up to 56 miles.





YASA CORNERS MARKET FOR PERFORMANCE EVs

Ferrari, Lambo, AMG and others want UK firm's radical electric motors

British electric motor maker Yasa expects to almost double its annual production volumes by 2026 as several major brands launch new performance cars exploiting its technology.

More than 25,000 motors are expected to come off the Mercedes-Benz-owned firm's Oxford production lines from next year, up from just under 15,000 today, as its unique motor design underpins an increasing number of new cars from the likes of Lamborghini and Mercedes-AMG.

Yasa's motors employ a proprietary axial-flux design, called the Yokeless and Segmented Armature, which is claimed to be four times more power-dense than the radial-flux

motors common in today's mainstream electric and hybrid cars.

In simple terms, it provides a boost of around 150bhp or more in a package not much larger than a stack of three or four dinner plates. Yasa's motors have already been used in the Ferrari SF90, Ferrari 296 GTB and Lamborghini Revuelto.

But it's the upcoming Lamborghini Temerario that is expected to account for the bulk of the brand's increase in output. The new supercar uses three Yasa motors and will be produced in relatively large numbers, rising to potentially 90,000 units during its lifetime, according to Lamborghini.

As previously reported,



Mercedes-AMG's new super-saloon uses up to three Yasa motors

Yasa motors will also feature in the Mercedes-AMG super-saloon to be unveiled next month. It will be the first model based on the German performance brand's AMG.EA electric car platform.

Autocar understands it will employ as many as three motors. Each produces 473bhp in a unit weighing 24kg and occupying just five litres of space – roughly half the size and weight of a Tesla Model 3's 241bhp radial-flux motor.

The same motor will also be deployed in the AMG variant of the new Mercedes-Benz CLA saloon due next year as well as a Porsche Cayenne Electric rival due in 2027.

However, Mercedes has confirmed it will make those

YASA IS READYING IN-WHEEL MOTORS TOO

In-wheel motors have become a focal point of EV development over the past two years, as new materials, designs and production techniques have mitigated concerns around the effects of adding unsprung weight.

Among the most prominent manufacturers of in-wheel motors is Surrey-based Protean.

But Yasa tech chief Tim Woolmer revealed to Autocar that Yasa is also angling for a slice of the market. He said: "Probably in 12-14 months, we will be showing off our

technology for the first time and it will blow your socks off."

He added that EVs are currently "in the 1930s", comparing the benefits brought by in-wheel motors to the development of disc brakes by Dunlop and Jaguar in the early 1950s.

He said: "I would guess in a significant period of time from now – 20, 30 or 40 years – that every electric car will have in-wheel motors. But it will be a fairly bumpy road and very challenging to get there."



Yasa's Woolmer: "Our [new] technology will blow your socks off"

"The Temerario uses three Yasa motors and will be made in large numbers"

wanted from any other product on the planet. That's a nice piece of business, if you're told that, because it means that you're almost designed into their vehicle for life."

Commercial director Andy North added: "Last year, something like 75% of Ferraris that came out of Maranello had a Yasa motor."

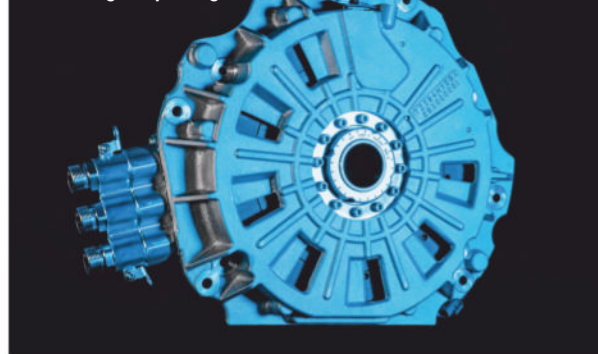
The company – founded in 2009 and acquired by Mercedes in 2021 – has a similar arrangement with Lamborghini, with its motors being integral to the design

of the Revuelto and the Temerario.

Woolmer suggested that Yasa's ultimate ambition is to become a byword for performance in the same vein as firms such as Brembo. He said: "They are the go-to people for high-performance brakes. There are a few brands like that in automotive and we want Yasa's brand to be synonymous with that, but equally with having the volume in the manufacturing to back it up."

CHARLIE MARTIN

Yasa's axial-flux motors pack more punch in a smaller, lighter package



AMG motors in-house on a new production line in Germany.

Nonetheless, the rise in annual output has required an overhaul of Yasa's factory, with two new production lines tailored to meet the demands of Ferrari and Lamborghini.

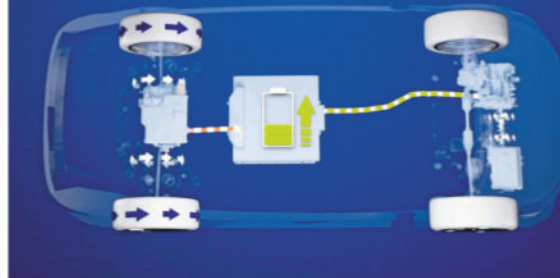
Discussing Yasa's rise from a University of Oxford PhD project to a supplier to some of the world's most prominent supercar manufacturers, founder and technology chief Tim Woolmer told Autocar: "Ferrari said to us: 'We cannot find a supplier on the planet that can fit a motor in the space [65mm] we have, because the engine crank is very low.'

"They physically couldn't get the performance they

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE

Car maker supplies ICE; ZF provides everything else to make it work



ZF CREATES PLUG-AND-PLAY RANGE-EXTENDER SET-UP

RANGE-EXTENDERS

have been in the mix of possible alternatives to pure-petrol and pure-diesel powertrains for nearly three decades, and with new eRE and eRE+ powertrain products from ZF Friedrichshafen arriving in 2026, we could start seeing more of them. It's a technology that appears to be enduring.

Citroën produced versions of the Saxo, Xsara and Berlingo back in the 1990s and there have been plenty of working concepts from various manufacturers since. For instance, GM launched the Chevrolet Volt in 2016 and the Mazda MX-30 R-EV is on sale today.

ZF is one of the world's largest automotive tier one suppliers and it's investing big in range-extender technology. Its aim is to make it easier for manufacturers to slot the technology into production cars in a modular way rather than evolve it from scratch. Such an approach is not unusual. Often, a new technology we see in a car is a product that has been developed by a tier one supplier and sold to the car manufacturer.

ZF developed a range-extender for London black cabs in 2018 and in November 2023 it began work on its latest products, the eRE (electric Range Extender) and eRE+, which gives the option of four-wheel drive. Work first started on the eRE at ZF's technical centre in Shanghai, reflecting the increasing appetite for range-extenders in China.

What exactly is a range-extender? In its purest form,

it's simply an EV but with a much smaller battery and a generator to top the battery up when needed. Unlike a full parallel hybrid, in which the engine and electric motor can drive the wheels in whichever configuration the manufacturer chooses, the combustion engine in a true range-extender doesn't drive the wheels: the electric motor does, powered by the battery, which is charged by the generator. The battery can usually also be charged via a socket like a plug-in hybrid. The technical name for a range-extender is a series hybrid, because the energy is passed in series, from generator to battery to motor.

The ZF eRE does that and a typical configuration is for a generator powered by a combustion engine, with a motor driving the rear wheels. The eRE+ develops that by adding a planetary gearset, a bi-directional clutch and a differential. This enables the motor-generator to drive the front wheels, which, with the main motor driving the rear wheels as before, gives four-wheel drive. Alternatively, the motor-generator is able to work in generator mode, de-clutched from the axle, to charge the battery while the car travels in rear-drive.

The set-up works with 400V or 800V architectures and includes the inverter and all software. The car maker supplies its own engine and high-voltage battery. The performance can be scaled to suit the vehicle size so the eRE produces from 94bhp to 148bhp and the eRE+ 94bhp to 201bhp of electrical power.

FIFTH-GEN GT2 RS TO BE MOST EXTREME 911 YET

Porsche eyes 750bhp for petrol-electric 911 range-topper

Porsche is gearing up to launch what insiders at its Zuffenhausen headquarters in Germany describe as the most extreme and technically advanced 911 yet: the fifth-generation GT2 RS.

Set to go on sale in the UK next year, the new range-topping 911 is being developed to stretch the

limits of what is possible in a road-legal Porsche. It will be powered by a heavily re-engineered, twin-turbocharged version of the company's signature horizontally opposed six-cylinder petrol engine, paired with an electric hybrid system derived from the new 911 GTS T-Hybrid.

One important goal of

the hottest 911 is to restore Porsche's supremacy at the Nürburgring, where development prototypes have been lapping as a full unveiling approaches.

New spy shots confirm the forthcoming 911 GT2 RS will

be as visually aggressive as it is technically ambitious. Apart from the doors, every body panel will be unique to the new car.

Up front, a new bumper and clamshell-style bonnet incorporate additional air

ducts to improve cooling for the front-mounted radiators and reduce turbulence within the front wheel arches. The arches are significantly wider than those on other 911s, housing broader tracks front and rear and lightweight centre-lock wheels. At the back, a massive fixed wing dominates, while a mostly

"Early prototypes achieved four-figure power outputs"

SPY SHOTS



ASTON FIRST TO ROLL OUT CARPLAY ULTRA

Aston Martin has become the first manufacturer to offer the second generation of Apple's in-car smartphone mirroring system.

Apple CarPlay Ultra expands dramatically the amount of screen space that the Apple interface can occupy, entering the car's instrument display as well as its main infotainment screen.

"Building on our in-house, state-of-the-art infotainment system, CarPlay Ultra will provide additional functionality and personalisation opportunities which place Aston Martin at the forefront of infotainment in the sector," said Aston CEO Adrian Hallmark.

The new system will first be rolled out in the US and Canada, with the UK and

Europe following within the next 12 months.

CarPlay Ultra will be included as standard in the DB12, Vantage, Vanquish and DBX 707 for the 2025 model year, along with the new DBX S.

Owners of existing cars with Aston Martin's latest-generation infotainment system (introduced with the launch of the DB12) will be offered a free

software update at official dealerships.

CarPlay was launched in 2014 and first featured in the Ferrari FF, with the California T following shortly after. Aston Martin's current technology boss, Roberto Fedeli, held the same role

at Ferrari at that time.

By 2016, CarPlay had become an option on many mainstream cars, and today it's rare to see it

omitted from a new car's standard kit list. Exceptions include the Tesla Model 3, Tesla Model Y and Leapmotor models.

Climate and audio controls are now accessible via the CarPlay interface and can be adjusted using Apple's Siri voice assistant

concealed exhaust system is visible.

Patent filings suggest Porsche has been developing a new 911 performance exhaust set-up that doubles as an aerodynamic device, combining the rear silencer and diffuser into a single integrated unit. It is not yet known whether it will be used on the GT2 RS.

Inside, the new 911 GT2 RS is expected to adopt a fully digital instrument panel for the first time while still offering a high degree of personalisation for track-focused buyers. Lightweight materials, limited sound insulation, minimalist trim

and an optional roll-cage will keep the focus on performance.

According to sources, early prototype versions of the 911 GT2 RS's engine achieved four-figure power outputs on the test bench, albeit in development trim.

The strongest indication of Porsche's hybrid direction comes from the new 911 GTS T-Hybrid, which combines a 3.6-litre flat six with a single electric turbocharger and a gearbox-mounted electric motor for a total of 534bhp. That car in effect previews the hybrid technology that is set to be deployed across the facelifted 992-series 911 line-up.

The exact capacity of the 911 GT2 RS's engine remains under wraps, although it is claimed to be paired with an electric hybrid system that incorporates two electric turbochargers and

a higher-output electric motor, suggesting the peak power output could reach at least 750bhp.

By way of comparison, the previous-generation 991-series 911 GT2 RS developed 690bhp and 553lb ft from its twin-turbo 3.8-litre flat six.

The switch to petrol-electric hybrid power will increase weight beyond the previous 911 GT2 RS's 1470kg. The 911 GTS T-Hybrid's set-up, for example, adds around 60kg.

As tradition dictates, production will be limited, and Porsche has already confirmed that "low-volume, high-emotion derivatives" will continue to play a central role in the 911 line-up. Pricing is expected to exceed that of the outgoing model, which started at around £200,000.

GREG KABLE

Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW



Project management is a passion for Aston Martin's Renee Knott

THE TOP DESIGNERS, engineers and company bosses will usually get the headlines and plaudits for the successful launch of a new car. But behind them is a team of hundreds, maybe thousands, working towards that success.

New models must be planned and costed then delivered on time and on budget. That involves planning and project management, and Renee Knott, whose role at Aston Martin sees her head up both of those areas, is one of those backstage heroes.

She left a staff role at JLR for a contract job at Aston in 2003 as a programme timing analyst, such was the pull of the marque and the extent to which "she loved the cars". She became a member of staff in 2006 and has been there since.

In her early days at JLR, Knott soon realised she wanted to "spend her whole life" working in project management. "I just love it," she says. "Even outside work, my life is a plan."

Knott was first deployed on the VH platform that would underpin a whole generation of Astons, starting with the DB9.

Project management is about creating relationships and networks and ultimately "building trust", says Knott. She speaks warmly of the family feel at Aston, of how everyone buys into a project where going the extra mile is not just a cliché but a reality: "Aston is ultimately a small, independent luxury brand."

There are partnerships with the likes of Mercedes-

AMG, but Knott says these are "very, very different" from how things were under Ford ownership in the Premier Automotive Group. "You would always have that safety blanket," she adds. In automotive terms, Aston doesn't now have "a big brother" to share technology and information.

Knott speaks highly of Aston's executive chairman Lawrence Stroll, who heads the company and helps to create an environment in which it can thrive on its own. She says he was immediately "very visible and very engaged" around Aston when he arrived five years ago. "There has been quite the transition since he joined," she adds. "He's really passionate about Aston Martin and wants to make it a success."

Knott describes seeing validation prototypes run off the production line as "quite emotional". She adds: "You see something you've been looking at in [digital renderings] suddenly come to life."

The culmination of the six-year DB12 project was a particular highlight for Knott as a project that grew in time and complexity in order to futureproof it with the likes of active safety and a new electrical architecture.

"I managed to go to Monaco as well for the launch event and joined the journalists driving the car, sitting with them having lunch," she says. "When they then tell you how amazing the car is, that's a real highlight."

"The culmination of the six-year DB12 project was a particular highlight"

GT2 RS will use twin-turbo flat six and electric motor derived from 911 GTS T-Hybrid set-up



New bumper and bonnet feature large cooling ducts to feed radiators

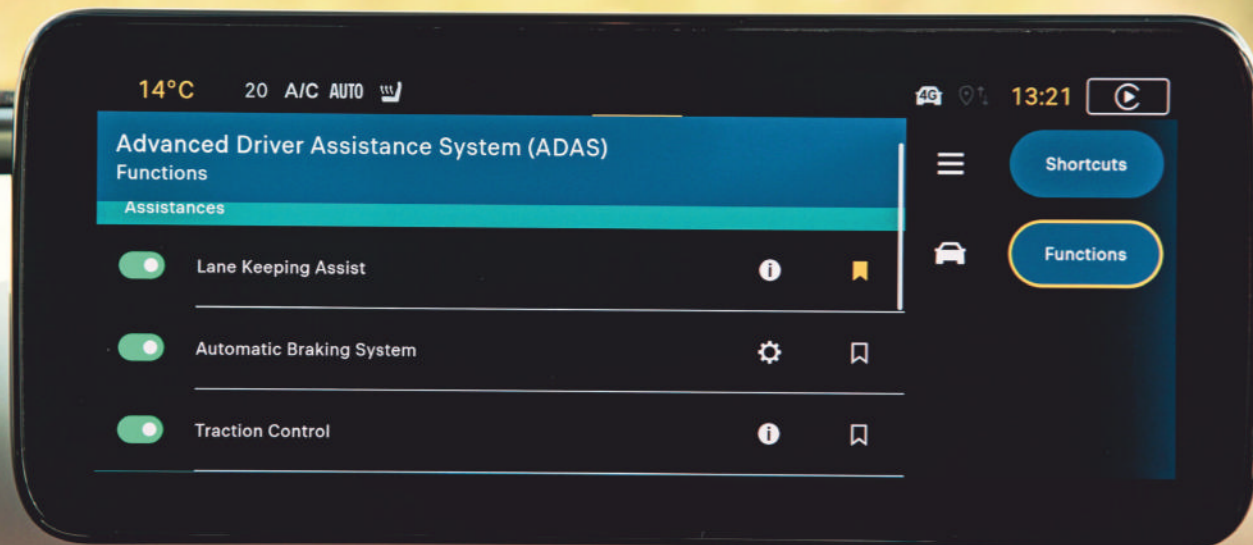


Large rear wing could be augmented by new aerodynamic exhaust

Maps and media can now appear in the digital head-up display

Owners can select various designs for the instruments, as well as personalised colours, backgrounds and screen layouts

A QUARTER OF MOTORISTS 'UNHAPPY' WITH THEIR ADAS



Survey's findings spark debate over how to close the ADAS 'trust gap'

Widespread confusion regarding the capabilities and limitations of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) is developing a 'trust gap' with modern cars.

That's the conclusion of a new survey from technology specialist DG Cities, which warns that in order to buck this trend, dealers and car makers need to explain the tech better to buyers. From its findings, 40% of respondents report receiving insufficient information at the point of purchase.

Assistance systems such as blindspot monitoring and lane centring were made standard on new cars through the European Union's recent General Safety Regulations 2 (GSR2) with the aim of halving road deaths.

Highlighting some of the findings from the survey, DG Cities behavioural scientist Lara Suraci said: "A quarter of motorists were not happy with their cars' ADAS features while one in 10 were unhappy with its accuracy."

ADAS are deployed in different ways by different car makers. Researchers say this is confusing buyers

and warn that it is key in the trust gap developing.

"We believe this variance between car makers risks confusing customers who shop around," said Balázs Csuvár, director of innovation at DG Cities.

He added that because ADAS "wasn't a key selling point" for car makers and because "there's no marketing gain" to be had, "it is not anyone's clear responsibility to promote and make ADAS acceptable and to function better".

Yousif Al-Ani, principal engineer of ADAS at Thatcham Research, agrees that inconsistency between systems and their reliability and accuracy could be compounding the problem. "Models that appear to be relatively new may be using old technologies and cheaper cars are more likely to have older tech and lower computing power," he said.

"ADAS is getting better with each new model"

However, he added: "Despite these problems, I believe ADAS is getting better with each new model."

Meanwhile, some organisations are trying to improve customers' understanding of ADAS. The Motor Ombudsman, an impartial dispute resolution service, now requires the car dealers among its membership to explain

the function and operation of ADAS at the point of a vehicle's handover.

Managing director Bill Fennell said: "With ADAS features becoming more complex and commonplace, and sometimes varying between makes and models, the codes now make reference to retailers providing clear information on their function and limitations during the purchase process."

Not all dealers are happy, though. "It's not our place to do this," the owner of a used car dealership told Autocar. "To say we must 'train' customers to understand their car's ADAS features could make us liable in the event that one of them has an accident. To also require us to do this at the car's handover, when the customer has so much else to absorb, is unrealistic."

Fennell insists that members are only required to give guidance. He said: "Explaining how the features work or referring the consumer to where they can find more information will allow buyers to develop an understanding of how these systems work before leaving the forecourt."

JOHNEVANS

UNDERCOVER REPORT: WHAT DEALERS TELL BUYERS ABOUT ADAS

Following the DG Cities survey, Autocar was keen to test dealer attitudes to ADAS. Posing as a buyer, a reporter visited four new car dealers and one used car supermarket.

Overall, his experience

was positive. For example, the VW dealer told him correctly that ADAS provide only assistance and are not intended to replace the driver. At Ford, he was told the only vehicle in the brand's

range with anything resembling autonomous capability was the Mustang Mach-E and only when specified with optional BlueCruise.

At a Mini dealer, the salesperson's explanation of ADAS was impressively detailed, but at Vauxhall the salesperson couldn't explain how lane centring differs from lane keeping assistance. At the used car supermarket, the salesperson was ignorant of the term ADAS but, by referring to its features list, identified the subject car's main ADAS functions.





MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

MONDAY

Important new date for your diary: Friday 25 July. That's when the British Motor Museum at Gaydon stages its first-ever Petrol & Pride event, a new gathering designed to bring members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community in the UK car industry together with the many thousands of us who love cars. Put simply, here's a brand-new chance to display your car (any car, from anywhere, but the more colourful the better) on the welcoming forecourt of the BMM – provided you register yourself, your car and a passenger (petrolandpride.co.uk) before you arrive. Do this and you get free entry to the museum, which houses a further 400 cool British cars that deserve your closest attention.

I'll be taking my – and formerly Matt Prior's – orange Ford Ranger. In fact, I'm told its loading bay is likely to be co-opted as the ideal elevated platform for the sound system and MC who will be tasked with making things happen. Support for Petrol & Pride has so far been generous from many corners of the UK car industry, which has worked damned hard in recent years to improve its inclusiveness for employees. If you support Petrol & Pride's aims – or just fancy an enjoyable day out – please register today.

TUESDAY

Usual frantic flurry to convert a UK drive of a car into magazine copy: our publishing schedules wait for no one. The subject this time was the basic £33k Volvo EX30 crossover (p25), a decent, well-priced car if you can look past the confusion of its screen-based switchgear.

The base model's simple spec and lowish price set me thinking about how instinctively, even irresistibly, we load our new cars with equipment, often to no good effect. Buy half a dozen new cars in a lifetime, load them with £5000-£10,000 of options or model upgrades (it's so easily done) and you've paid enough to deny yourself a seventh.

WEDNESDAY

I can never resist shooting dozens of phone pictures of other people's cars at events like



Cropley will be at the inaugural Petrol & Pride. Will you?



Mart's newly rebuilt 1932 Ford two-door saloon turned heads at Gaydon

“Our household has four cars but I can feel a fifth coming”

last evening's hugely successful Gaydon Gathering (2000 tickets issued, all free). In particular, I'm attracted by modified but restrained post-vintage American cars, and one the nicest I've seen in ages was this superb 1932 Ford two-door saloon (above) brought by a bloke called Mart, who had just rebuilt and painted it for the summer from parts that had been hanging about in his garage for many years. Do you like it too? You can see much more at Mart's Garage on YouTube.

THURSDAY

Do you know anyone who's ever reached a state of grace with her or his car collection? I'm not talking about the rich-as-Croesus souls who can afford to indulge themselves with 30 favourites nurtured in a heated motor house, but those of us who have half a dozen assorted motors and are always thinking about shuffling them. Our household currently has the four I'm always banging on about (Alpine A110, Dacia Duster, Ford Ranger Raptor, Mini Cooper) but I can

definitely feel a fifth coming. Especially since the sale proceeds of a veteran motorbike have just landed. Trouble is, cars that appeal range from a two-stroke Saab 96 to a 1925 Dodge tourer, via a two-door Range Rover, a Tesla Model 3 and a Series 2A Landie. The situation has come to a head because one of my sons, who lives nearby, has an unoccupied garage whose emptiness yawns at me whenever I think of it. One more car is now truly viable in my little line-up, but how the hell do I decide?

AND ANOTHER THING

It's been over five years since Stirling Moss died, and I'm missing him. Until 2020 – and for a few months afterwards because of the obits – he was such a giant of the racing scene that I sometimes reckoned it was all a bit overdone. But now I'm feeling that his unique mix of straightforwardness, modesty and the right kind of patriotism is missing so I've started reading all the old books again.



GET IN TOUCH

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PRIOR CONVICTION

Matt Prior

Is there a supermini whose character, over the years, has changed as much as that of the Nissan Micra? At least in the eyes of its maker, if not in the minds of its buyers.

The first-generation Micra was a sturdy, box-like thing, as plain as cars come. The second one was much more rounded and funky, Europeanised, even, to the point that it won Car of the Year in 1993 – the first Japanese car to do so. The third model took the idea ran with it, going more upmarket still, being cutesy and classic, with Bakelite-style interior switchgear and traditional fabrics. It felt expensive, and maybe, to make, it was.

And then came the 2010 disaster: it was a car that felt so cheap and rough that when we said as much, the good people of Nissan agreed. Sometimes, they explained, they would take offence at a verdict and tell us why we were wrong, or why they thought we were wrong, but in other cases a drubbing in the media would give them a way to convince their bosses they should do it differently. This was one of those cases, and Nissan duly did better with a 2016 Micra that was a markedly decent thing, if not markedly interesting. It went off sale in 2022.

In the meantime, Nissan's rivals had been making superminis that were sometimes great and sometimes fine but fundamentally consistent; at least they were always trying to be the same thing. Ford made a bunch of Fiestas that each felt every inch like Fiestas. Even now Renault's new Clio is trying to occupy basically the same position as the Nicole-Papa original, as the most chic of the superminis.

All kinds of cars try to retain their core ethos, in fact. If you climbed into, say, a BMW 3 Series



today, I think you could probably tell it's trying to do basically the same thing as a 3 Series from three or more decades ago.

But here comes another new Micra, which you can read about on page 4. Yes, it's another reinvention, this time as a cute EV, but, it seems, it's different from previous Micras not only in powertrain but also in character (again). "Think you know me? Think again," said the teaser on Nissan's website last week ahead of the launch. "It's been a while, and I've had a glow up. Let's meet up soon. You won't believe the difference."

Won't I? I wonder if that's (a) true and (b) a shame if (a) is the case. Because while Nissan may well think its Micra has done different things, then, 2010 calamity aside, I wonder how much buyers have noticed or cared.

"The Micra is steady and reliable if uninteresting"

Like it or not, and I get the impression Nissan doesn't like all of it, the Micra has gained a reputation as steady and reliable if uninteresting transport. As its exterior designer Yongwook Cho told us, the new car's design is meant to make it "a grandma car no more".

That's a theme you come across now and again in consumerism: a producer of something – cars, clothes, radio shows – seeks to throw off an image as being popular with the elderly and tries to bring in a new, more youthful audience.

And to an extent I understand it, if the current image is actually harmful. I know people deep into their sixties who still think Jaguars are cars for old men, and they wouldn't buy one even if they could. So I get why Jaguar, as a maker of glamorous sports cars, which it would be nice to think it will be again soon, would try to make itself attractive to a younger audience. Because even if the young haven't got any money, it will appeal to the old who don't want to seem old.

But is being a supermini admired for its sturdiness, reliability and sensibleness really so bad? As people stay both in work and healthy for longer, the difference between young and old is less marked than it was. And whatever the age, what's so bad about a supermini that's reliable, easy to use and not sold by spivs?

In short, I think it's possible to make a supermini that will appeal to everyone, without cheesing off a certain section of drivers by implying it's not for them. Assuming they're listening, of course. Buyers have decided for themselves what the Micra is in the past. There's no reason to think they won't this time, too.

GET IN TOUCH

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RACING LINES



Damien Smith



Hill, DeLeon and Rainford (pictured) swept the board for BMW at Brands Hatch

The British Touring Car Championship makes its annual visit this weekend to Snetterton in Norfolk on the back of a breathless start to the season at Donington Park and Brands Hatch. Last time, the rear-wheel-drive BMWs hit back after an underwhelming opening weekend. Jake Hill kick-started his title defence with a victory from pole position, then two rising stars savoured their first BTCC victories as WSR scooped all three wins in Kent.

Double Donington winner Ash Sutton was only 10th in the first race at Brands, but a third and a fourth later in the day mean he retains his championship lead at this early stage of the season. The Alliance Racing Ford driver is five points ahead of ExceLR8 Hyundai's Tom Ingram, who has yet to record a win this term but has still scored consistently and well, with three second places and two thirds so far. Hill's win on his home circuit, consolidated by a second place in the final race of the day, has pushed him into contention, 12 points behind Sutton.

Already it appears that the BTCC's top trio of aces are squaring up for what promises to be a frenetic three-way fight for the crown.

BREATHS OF FRESH AIR

After Hill scored WSR's 133rd BTCC victory in the Brands opener, making the team officially the most successful in the series' history, 19-year-old British-Filipino Daryl DeLeon scored his own personal landmark in an eventful race two.

Starting seventh on the soft Goodyear tyre, WSR's DeLeon benefited from a mid-race safety car interruption. Un-Limited Motorsport team-mates Dexter Patterson and Max Hall skittled their Cupras into the Paddock Hill gravel, then indulged in a bit of 'afters' – how very old-school BTCC. Then, just as racing was about to resume, Dan Cammish's second-placed Alliance Ford

"The two indulged in a bit of 'afters' – how very old-school"

suddenly came to a halt in the middle of the track and was collected by Aiden Moffat's WSR BMW. That was tough on soft-tyred Cammish, who was well placed to attack hard-tyred leader Hill. Instead, DeLeon cracked on to pass his champion team-mate and take the honours.

"I am a BTCC race winner, and to do it on my 50th start as well was brilliant," gushed DeLeon, a former champion of Radical one-make racing.

Another first-time winner at Brands was a 26-year-old rookie who is wasting little time delivering on his obvious promise. Charles Rainford won only his sixth BTCC race by first picking off WSR team-mate Hill, then firing down the inside of leader Dan Rowbottom's Ford with robust commitment. The move earned him a formal reprimand, but he escaped a penalty to win from Hill, who just about managed to fight off a charging Ingram in the closing stages.

Sussex native Rainford got this far via historic racing, which is a novel route. Indeed, a week

earlier, he was racing a Ford Capri at the Donington Historic Festival.

"To get my first podium in race one [finishing second to Hill], a 'hard' second race on the hard tyre and then my first win to end the day... I'm unbelievably happy," said Rainford. "Let's go get another at Snetterton!"

HAT-TRICK FOR FERRARI

Ferrari will arrive at the Le Mans 24 Hours next month on the back of a red-hot run of form in the World Endurance Championship. Following clear victories in Qatar and at Imola, the AF Corse-run 499P hypercars made it three from three at the Spa-Francorchamps 6 Hours.

Briton James Calado and his Italian team-mates Alessandro Pier Guidi and Antonio Giovinazzi beat the other crew in scarlet, but only by four seconds and after divergent fuel strategies for the final stint caused a high degree of uncertainty in front of a bumper crowd. Pier Guidi faced a late splash and dash that meant he had to press on to keep ahead, while Dane Nicklas Nielsen was in fuel-saving mode over the final hour and only just made the flag in the #50 Ferrari.

The result clearly bodes well for another Ferrari hat-trick – this one at Le Mans. But results and form in 'normal' WEC rounds don't always correspond to much at 'the big one'. First, Le Mans has its own Balance of Performance formula to equalise cars from the different Hypercar manufacturers. Second, it was clear at Spa that the opposition is edging closer to the Ferraris on race pace. Alpine, BMW and Peugeot all took the fight to the 499Ps, with the A424 helmed by Mick Schumacher finishing a close third for a second straight race.

Ferrari will obviously head to Le Mans as favourites – but how much does that actually mean at the world's greatest endurance race?



Ferraris are fastest in WEC but rivals are keeping them honest

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

CHANGE IS GOOD AND BAD

I read with interest Matt Prior's appreciation for a more 'endearing' version of the gentleman's G-Wagen (Prior Conviction, 23 April).

Matt is clearly 'of a certain age' – and as I sit comfortably in the same cynical, nostalgic, old-gittish space, I too find myself wanting the good things that I remember of older cars, while conveniently forgetting that there was plenty of rubbish going on with them also.

Each to their own, but personally I'm cool with new paint colours and bigger wheels. I'm far more irritated by countless electronic interventions and additions that I neither want nor need, whether they be supposed EU requirements like speed and seatbelt 'pinging' or simply nonsense expressions of greater aspirational luxury, such as the electric parcel shelf in my Range Rover. Really? As my kids and Matt's kids might say, WTF?

What is clear is that the ever greater choice of virtually everything for your car simply means greater revenue for the car companies, even if those specification choices seemingly come at the cost of customer service choice, which tends, these days, to only come in one style: dreadful.

I recently took delivery of my new AMG G63 (yes, Matt, vulgar big wheels and Magno/matt paint, but a truly life-affirming, hilarious joy to drive) and promptly rejected it, because it had blemished paintwork that somebody somewhere had tried to 'polish out'. In 35-plus years of motoring, that wasn't something I'd ever experienced before.

My rejection was accepted, but then, in a clear example of Little Britain's 'computer says no' bit imitating life, it took three months for my monies to be refunded from a combination of the dealership and Mercedes-Benz UK Customer Services, who mostly blamed each other and the standard 'processes and compliance issues' – although they apologised profusely, on many, many occasions and kept assuring me that they valued my custom very much. Well, they won't have to in the future.

I realise 'customer issues' just aren't sexy, but I read about a good number in Autocar, and these car makers and dealers, as they seek to grow, are constantly losing sight of us, it seems, just as long as we keep ticking the right options boxes.

MAF
Warwickshire



GREAT BY NAME AND BY NATURE

What a great week I've had in your fair country. Due to a choral concert commitment in Hebden Bridge in early May, we decided to take our Cupra Born on a nine-day road trip, which had us visit Galloway, York, the Calder Valley and the Lake District. The conclusions I can draw from our visit are: the people of Scotland and northern England are universally friendly and helpful; our electric motoring experience was almost entirely stress-free, as we found CCS2 ultra-fast chargers to be plentiful and never had to wait for one; and the proliferation of roadworks is as bad in England and Scotland as it is in Ireland...

One of my personal highlights was a visit to the excellent Lakeland Motor Museum at the south side of Lake Windermere. What a joyous place, full of motoring nostalgia and a fabulous exhibit dedicated to Sir Malcolm and Sir Donald Campbell. I had read about it in your recent feature on British motor museums (25 September 2024) and it didn't disappoint.

We would have no hesitation in taking our EV back to England. Next time, the Cotswolds and Goodwood.
Pat Brennan, Letterkenny, Ireland

FLYING OFF THE HANDLE

I often ask myself a question: has there ever been a car with the rear door handles in the C-pillar that looked good?

I'm always reminded of the Morris Marina coupé, on which the front doors looked unbalanced, as it retained the doors from the saloon. Cars with hidden handles strike the same balance, as the front doors have to accommodate

the rear doors. This never looks in proportion and is coupled with ungainly black plastics and fussy design to disguise the handle.

The Dacia Bigster is the latest to incorporate this, and why? What is the message it's trying to give? It isn't a low-slung Italian coupé with two doors; it's a large SUV. It would have looked more purposeful and neater with conventional handles.

However, going back to my

question about handles in the C-pillar never looking good, perhaps, mildly, the Alfa Romeo 156 just about carried it off, and the new Renault 5, I admit, looks good.

Jason Maycock
Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire

INEOS GOT LOST

Ineos's problem was from the very start. Jim Ratcliffe intimated a hose-out Defender 90 that would be fairly cheap and built in the UK. None of that happened. It morphed into a sophisticated 4x4 that was much bigger than a 90, much more expensive and built abroad. It therefore is absolutely no different from the new Defender. This at a time when small 4x4s to be used by utility companies, the RNLI and the police, even the army, was and still is much in demand.

In my opinion, Ratcliffe should simply have bought the rights to the Ibx 4x4 and reconfigured it. Utility companies would have bitten his arm off for an Ibx that was a little more refined but still hose-out.

Alas, the damage was done and can't be righted. The project lost its way. And now here the Ineos boss is announcing that the Fusilier will be made in 2028 or 2029 (Autocar, 2 April) in the same month we're told Land Rover is developing a baby Defender. Again, what's the difference between them? Why



does Ratcliffe think many people will choose the Fusilier over the baby Defender? They appear to be identical even in size.

Is it too late to return to Ratcliffe's original in-pub (did anyone fall for that PR?) idea of a replacement 90? No, but he would have to start by admitting the failures – all of them.

The Grenadier will never sell in the numbers he thought and nor will the Fusilier, as pretty as it is. There is still a market for his 90 idea, but he will probably be beaten to it by someone like Ford or Renault.

Ford priced the Bronco too high in the US and falling sales aren't adding to the appeal. Once Ford and Jeep grasp that cars need to be made much cheaper, they will clean up.

'Arthur Sleep'

Via autocar.co.uk

I'M NOT 'APPY

Great reporting by John Evans in the 30 April issue (News) on local councils forcing drivers to pay for parking via smartphone apps.

I get that removing the option of coin payment saves councils the cost of collection, but there should at least be machines allowing payment via bank card.

I also get why RingGo et al are making £30 million a year in fees, as someone must pay for the apps. But why haven't all the councils in the country agreed to use only one provider to cut the fees or, better still, commissioned their own app?

My main beef, though, is that councils are saving money by not having to collect cash from these machines, yet we often pay extra to park when we do them a favour and use an app when other options are available. We should always pay the same amount, regardless of method.

Councils have increased parking fees at an outrageous rate recently, so this is the least they could do.

Marcus Rolle

Via email

TOURIST TROUBLE

The huge problem with parking payment apps is geo-blocking. As a tourist visiting from abroad with my own car, I can't even see the app in my phone's app store, let alone download and use it. I also can't pay by phone, as the fee can't be charged to my foreign phone bill.

Swap coin-operated parking machines for ones that allow credit card payment – not for apps!

Thomas Schneider

Via Facebook

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48



GREAT REASONS TO BUY

Next week's issue

ON SALE 28 MAY

ROAD TEST



LOTUS EMEYA

British brand's electric GT faces the toughest challenge in the business. Can it really go toe to toe with the Porsche Taycan?

INVESTIGATION



HOW SHOT IS AN EV BATTERY AFTER 175,000 MILES?

We set up an independent test of the battery in a leggy Tesla Model 3

FIRST DRIVE



BYD DOLPHIN SURF

Is this miniature hatchback the affordable EV you've been waiting for?

EVERY WEEK

LIVING WITH A...



DACIA DUSTER

We collect a no-nonsense, affordable new family SUV with a fuel-sipping hybrid powertrain

USED GUIDE



AUDI E-TRON GT

Ingolstadt's electric grand tourer is now a bargain buy on the used market. Here's what to look out for

AUTOCAR

The original car magazine, published since 1895 'in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage'

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HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time – either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production specification. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

UK VERDICTS



TESTED 14.5.25, WARWICKSHIRE DELIVERIES NOW

PORSCHE TAYCAN TURBO GT

Porsche's GT-badged electric range-topper finally deploys its 1000bhp-plus on UK roads



T hose waiting for the now widely practised clichés about very fast EVs might be disappointed by what follows. Is the Porsche Taycan Turbo GT actually unpleasant when given its near-1100bhp head? Painful, even? Nope.

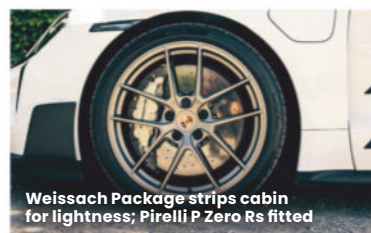
It responds to the angle of your right foot superbly well – and in a way, from low speeds especially, that makes just about every other performance car seem like it must have been running in some secret limp mode. Is it violent? Can be. But not brutish, or even boorish – not unless you are. The point is, it does precisely what you ask of it. The odd part is being able to ask for so much, so very precisely indeed.

While you get used to its potential, the raw performance feels otherworldly. More like being sucked into a wormhole than fired out of a cannon, I imagine. Instant, constant and apparently unending for all it matters on the road, but it is utterly spectacular, whichever metaphor you fancy.

Here it is, then: Porsche's new range-topping, zero-emission, rocket-sled Taycan, on UK roads and in right-hand drive. This is our first chance to drive it on the road anywhere, in this case fitted with the no-cost-option Weissach Package, which gets you the high-downforce bodykit with huge rear wing, stripped-out interior with lightweight stereo and glazing, GT3 carbonfibre-backed bucket seats and deleted carpets and back seats. Honestly, I think a regular 'TGT' would be enough for me. What's 70kg between 2.3-tonne friends, eh?

The full-body 'Taycan' decal set is also a feature of Weissach Package cars, incidentally, and you can have it in a different colour, on a different shade of paint, should you want to avoid the full magnificence of this car's Marty the Zebra impression (which gets truly uncanny when, parked up, it suddenly pops up on its active suspension to ease your entry. Crack-a-lackin etc).

The Turbo GT is the only Taycan that gets the Porsche Active Ride suspension as standard. It has GT-department tuning here, though, and feels like it's doing less proactive pitching and rolling of the body, ►



Weissach Package strips cabin for lightness; Pirelli P Zero Rs fitted

TESTER'S NOTE

The Weissach Package's lightweighting programme went as far as deleting the Taycan's rear stereo speakers and seatbelts – but not its electric rear windows, a little oddly. There are still window switches back there, too, intended for use by precisely nobody. **MS**



"The steering telegraphs load and camber with a clarity few other brands are able to manage"

◀ when put in the right driving mode, than I've known other Taycans and Panameras do.

You suspect those Weissach engineers wanted less novelty factor about the dynamic character and as close and compelling a sense of connection with the road as they could produce through steering, chassis and pedals. They've done remarkably well, giving this car the ability to remain fluent and supple at speed while taking the sting out of almost every edge, pockmark and divot, without preventing you from feeling any of them.

A proper, genuinely adhesive set of Pirelli P Zero R tyres wrapped around forged 21in wheels no doubt helps a lot (you can choose even stickier Trofeo RS rubber). Whatever the main difference maker may be, the car's close body control and easy, fluent chassis composure on fast roads are, with familiarity, almost as remarkable as its outlandish pace.

"It's bloody clever how they make it feel like a proper GT car right away," one perceptive tester put it. Devilishly clever, I would say. The steering is key: it is just positive enough but deliciously weighty and communicative, telegraphing load and camber with a clarity that few other brands seem to be able to manage.

The supple yet unerringly level, guitar-string ride is a touchstone, too, filtering just enough but passing through plenty to foster a sense of oneness with the asphalt. The low, arrow-straight driving position plays its part.

There are even shift paddles. They're not actually the sole preserve of the Taycan Turbo GT now and, needless to say, they don't actually 'shift' anything, nor even toggle regen up and down as you might find in other EVs with paddles (here, the left one switches regen on and off; the right dials up instant-idiot 'attack' mode on the

powertrain). But they're there. For a moment, you could be driving a GT3 – albeit one with a waterfall slipway's extra hit of instant torque.

So is all that enough? Does it add up to a top-level, GT-department driving experience that can be as engaging as any of Weissach's best sports cars, while doing more than simply flapping your ears back like Gromit in a wind tunnel?

It's a hell of a lot. I had 72 hours and about 500 miles in this car, and I was still unpacking its unique character and appeal at the end of it. It's a mighty thing, and it's first among every six-figure electric performance car I've yet tested for outright charisma and dizzying dynamic capability.

But having sampled the car on Monteblanco circuit a year ago and now on UK roads, I'm still not fully convinced about it – not, at least, by Porsche's own famously high standards. Because once you've acclimatised your right foot to its anchor-off-a-cliff responsiveness, this Turbo GT just doesn't quite ask enough of you: it's too smooth and easy to operate; not quite complex or manually involving enough to captivate and compel like a GT3 or GT4 can; and perhaps just a little too locked-on-line with its sheer composure and stability at speed to invite you to explore its chassis layer by layer and bring it perfectly to heel, like the greatest Weissach creations are able to do.

It would be flat wrong, quite clearly, to suggest the Taycan Turbo GT does nothing to make a gentler pace truly entertaining and only has its power and pace to keep the

driver coming back. That's where plenty of its rivals are, and have been over the years, but there is certainly drama and star quality about the way this car goes down the road, as well as the rate at which it can do it. For now, that may be achievement enough.

What the very fastest-of-the-fast Taycan still hasn't done, it would seem, is find that crucial last evolutionary step; plumbed its torque-vectoring potential; opened up its titanic performance and handling composure with matching entertainment factor; and brought that tantalising complexity of flavour to its driving experience that other fast EVs are now finally beginning to tap.

MATT SAUNDERS

TECH SPEC PORSCHE TAYCAN TURBO GT WITH WEISSACH PACK

Spellbinding and fluent composure matches eye-popping thrust. Not yet ready for a GT3 badge, though

★★★★★

Price £189,200

Engine Two permanent magnet

synchronous motors

Power 1094bhp (overboost)

Torque 915lb ft (launch control)

Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear (front),

2-spd automatic (rear), 4WD

Kerb weight 2220kg

0-62mph 2.2sec

Top speed 190mph

Battery 105/97kWh (total/usable)

Range, economy 334-345 miles,

2.9-3.0mpkWh

CO₂, tax band 0g/km, 3%

Rivals Lotus Evija 900 Sport Carbon,

Tesla Model S Plaid



Turbo GT's supple ride and remarkable composure give a great sense of connection

TESTED 9.5.25, GLOUCESTERSHIRE DELIVERIES NOW

VOLVO EX30 SINGLE MOTOR

You can save thousands by choosing the base powertrain. Should you?

Of all the bad habits that we accumulate across our motoring lives, one of the worst might just be to presume that we have to pay well above a car's basic price for a respectable motoring experience. The 'Post Office spec' is long gone from makers' ranges, yet Brits are still well known for buying 'richer' specifications than anyone else in Europe. Richer for whom, you may reasonably ask.

The most basic Volvo EX30 shows the wisdom of refraining from ticking boxes on the order form. Sure, you can pay extra for a bigger battery, more gadgets and four-wheel drive (courtesy of a second motor), but without going for any of that, you get a handsome, compact EV that certainly doesn't look like a poverty model, enough power to shame ICE cars four times as expensive in a 0-62mph drag race, a respectable 209-mile range (admittedly, it might be more like 160 in the dead of winter) and a set of touchscreen controls that are mercifully simplified (because the base car simply doesn't have so many things that need adjusting).

The EX30 has plenty of relatives within the extended Geely family and uses identical mechanicals to the lower-end models of several. But thanks to Volvo's continuing concentration on Swedish design, done in Gothenburg, this is

unmistakably a Volvo inside and out, and all the better for it.

The elegant simplicity of the design, especially in the cabin, appeals to most people, although some are critical of the textures and recyclable textiles that are mostly used.

Sitting in the airy cabin, higher set and less claustrophobic than most, you're left in no doubt that this is a very modern car. The seats are comfortable over short and long distances, but the cabin's rear is confined for big adults, because although the EX30 has packaging advantages over ICE cars, it's less than 4.3 metres long and thus feels refreshingly compact for an EV in the city. The boot is big, though.

Much has already been said about the lack of hard switches and the convoluted protocols of

the touchscreen functions, so there's no point in harping on. One advantage, though, is that the base EX30 has fewer functions so you're confronted with fewer guessing games. It must surely be the case that Volvo is working hard right now to make this work better.

On the road, this EX30 is very quiet and comfortable, although two foibles stand out. One is that the steering is one rung too light and therefore feels rather vague. Another is that although the car is quiet over bumps and rides acceptably well, it simply can't match the flatness and composure we've long become used to in ICE cars, which tend to be nose-heavy. This isn't the heaviest of EVs by any means (its 1800-odd kilos at the kerb make it a comparative lightweight), but it still bucks about on those

lumpy surfaces Britain does so well.

This EX30 is probably at its best cruising about the suburbs or plying outer-city B-roads – which is good, because that's where it will probably spend most of its life. That kind of use suits its modest range and supple, quiet bump-absorption ability. Bigger kids might feel a bit restricted in the rear, but at least their gear will fit.

One of the biggest drawbacks is sure to be the £33,060 entry price, provided buyers can resist the lure of the options list. If they can, they will be doing themselves a favour.

STEVE CROPLEY

TECH SPEC VOLVO EX30 SINGLE MOTOR CORE

In all but cruising range, the most basic version of Volvo's compact EV, with its smaller battery and single motor, might just be the best of all

★★★★☆

Price £33,060

Engine Permanent magnet synchronous motor

Power 268bhp

Torque 253lb ft

Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, RWD

Kerb weight 1833kg

0-62mph 5.7sec

Top speed 112mph

Battery 49kWh (usable)

Range, economy 209 miles, 4.1mpkWh

CO₂, tax band 0g/km, 3%

Rivals Kia Niro EV, Renault Megane, Smart #1



Touchscreen has a lot to do, but not quite so much in the entry-level EX30



TESTER'S NOTE

This EX30 lacks the pricier versions' steering effort adjustment. This wouldn't matter much if Volvo had stuck with a 'mid' setting, but it has given us the lightest one. A shame. **SC**



“With a well-judged balance of ride and handling and a fast turn of pace, it’s like a supersized VW Golf GTI”



TESTED 6.5.25, NORFOLK DELIVERIES NOW

AUDI SQ5

New Q5 has underwhelmed us. Can the 362bhp sports version elevate it?

Our road test of the Audi Q5 last week highlighted a slip in standards among mid-sized SUVs. That the best in class scores no more than three and a half stars says plenty about the progress being made (or rather not being made), the bread-and-butter Q5 itself notable only really for being new, rather than any kind of leap forward.

In that context, it's hard to get too excited by the SQ5 performance version – the type of go-faster car that can typically push a middling breed in a direction that simply compromises it further. Which admittedly is unlikely to make you eagerly anticipate the words to come over the next two pages. So I will allow you to skip to the end briefly: yep, four stars, and the SQ5 reveals itself to have plenty more sparkle about it than the donor car.

The SQ5 is notably better than the standard Q5 on which it is based in almost every area when you view it through the right lens.

If you're looking for a razor-sharp handling tool that can cheat physics to lap the Nürburgring like a sports saloon, you will be disappointed. If you're instead after an all-weather, all-scenario machine that seems to have been developed for you to enjoy everyday drives in a practical, comfortable package, read on.

The best way of describing it is like a supersized Volkswagen Golf

GTI. The SQ5 has a well-judged balance of ride and handling, backed up by a fast Audi-typical turn of pace, and all while being able to remain civilised, refined and comfortable for when you want the miles just to tick by.

Even if it is quite uninspiring, the standard Q5 is still a decent starting point, as a “pleasant and competitive” three-and-a-half-star

car without any obvious weakness, as our road test put it. The Audi Sport engineers have taken that base and made a real unexpected gem.

Yet why is it unexpected? Because as the Audi model range has grown in size, so too has the amount of S and RS models it offers. The range is so broad, so diverse, that it can be hard to know where the centre of



Comfort is better than you might expect and it handles superbly too

TESTER'S NOTE

My hunch is if the RS Q5 comes, it will push things in a direction that they don't really need to go. Becoming faster, stiffer and more raucous won't necessarily up the fun factor. The SQ5 already feels like a sweet spot. **MT**



Interior doesn't quite live up to the price tag; full-width digital array is standard in S models



SQ5 also comes in coupé-like Sportback shape. Boot capacity is unaffected

the brand sits and what a fast Audi really is these days. The numbers always tantalise on paper, yet the cars have a habit of falling short on the road.

The surprise factor of the SQ5 isn't in terms of what's under the bonnet, although as a sign of the times the diesel of its predecessor is no more. This has been replaced by a 3.0-litre turbo petrol V6 with 362bhp and 406lb ft of torque and hybrid assistance (at low speeds, it can run solely on the 24bhp electric motor), along with Quattro four-wheel drive and a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox.

All of this combines to make the 0-62mph time of 4.5sec very believable. It is a very quick car off the line, and while there is occasionally hesitancy from the S Tronic transmission when not in its Sport mode, which feels like it can't decide what to do with the electrical assistance on offer, your right foot rarely wants something the SQ5 can't give it.

It sounds good, too, particularly

at start-up, and real-world economy of around 32mpg is decent for such prodigious performance.

Such performance was ever thus with modern fast Audis, which have never really fallen short in that department – it's the chassis that have been lacking.

Key to the SQ5's transformation is its standard adaptive air suspension. This enables it to not only ride better than we have come to expect from S-badged Audis but also improve roadholding and agility at the same time.

It hasn't suddenly turned into a Mk1 Porsche Macan in hitting handling heights – a level no other mid-size SUV maker, Porsche included, has got near. But it does everything dynamically to a very good standard, and it has been holistically created in a way that you know what Audi's engineers were trying to do creating it.

Time to return to that GTI analogy. The SQ5 has got character, which manifests itself in its breadth of ability. Like the hot Golf, it will

merely entertain rather than excite you on the twistiest B-road, but you will enjoy the other 95% of the miles you do that day more in the process.

The SQ5 is not perfect. It's pricey (£75k!) to the point that it will always be a niche choice. Modern cars are all pricey, mind you: I went hunting for a similarly conceived sports estate for a point of comparison, and a BMW M340i Touring is nearly £65k itself.

As with the standard Q5, you would like a more special interior for the money, even if the sports seats and Dinamica microfibre trim do elevate it.

The deal-breaker could come out of left field: the lane keeping assistance function, which legally must default to on every time, is terrible – shockingly so. It simply does not work on UK roads, failing to read the correct lane markings and intervening erroneously.

If you can tolerate turning that off each time, you will have one of the most complete fast Audis this decade. It's clearly conceived and

is full of agreeable improvements over the standard Q5.

The mid-size SUV class has a new champion and perhaps its best all-round package. Who would have thought it would be a 362bhp V6?

MARK TISSHAW

TECH SPEC AUDI SQ5 TFSI QUATTRO LAUNCH EDITION

New suspension helps give the SQ5 the chassis to match the powertrain. Pricey and with poor active safety technology yet pleasing nonetheless

★★★★☆

Price £76,525

Engine V6, 2994cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor and ISG

Power 362bhp at 5500-6300rpm

Torque 406lb ft at 1700-4000rpm

Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic, 4WD

Kerb weight 2115kg

0-62mph 4.5sec

Top speed 155mph

Economy 33.6mpg

CO₂ tax band 190g/km, 37%

Rivals BMW M340i Touring, Porsche Macan S

ROAD TESTS



AUTOCAR ROAD TEST 5749

TOYOTA LAND CRUISER

Can the go-anywhere off-roader also be taken upmarket?

MODEL TESTED TOYOTA LAND CRUISER 2.8 D-4D 204 INVINCIBLE

Price £77,845

Power 201bhp at 3000-3400rpm

Torque 369lb ft at 1600-2800rpm

0-60mph 10.3sec

30-70mph 10.3sec

Top speed 108mph (claimed)

Average economy 27.4mpg

Touring economy 30.7mpg

CO₂ emissions 280g/km

70-0mph 53.8m (15deg C, dry)

Land Cruisers have that aura. It's one earned from habitually being the wheels of choice for tough people in tough parts of the world, where dependability is all and salubrious alternatives aren't considered. Because what's worse when you're in the back of beyond: a bit of scratchy plastic trim or electrical gremlins?

The challenge for Toyota now, and especially in Europe, is that people want it all. Since Land Rover reinvented the Defender and demonstrated that truly car-like road manners could be delivered with little to no compromise to off-road ability, and that an off-roader's cabin can be both hard-wearing and a little luxurious, everyone else has had to rapidly up their game.

Jeep's Wrangler now steers more accurately than ever and has a cabin of surprisingly high quality compared with what went before. Ford has had huge success with the V6-engined Ranger Raptor – an extra-fruity, extra-capable take on its extremely popular, utilitarian pick-up. Meanwhile, in the time since the Land Cruiser was last meaningfully updated, an entirely new company has sprung up, offering the quintessential old-world Defender experience but with modern manufacturing to underpin it and juicy, BMW-sourced drivelines. You'll know a lot about Ineos Automotive and its Grenadier by now, and that car will be of particular interest to would-be owners of the latest Land Cruiser. The two cost an almost identical amount, at just under £80k, and are billed as no-bull machinery.

So the new fifth-gen, 'J250' Land Cruiser enters a different world to that of its predecessor (which, if you can believe it, went on sale in 2009). As such, it's quite a different car – one whose lauded design overhaul is the only visible part of some major revisions aimed at modernising the LC experience while retaining its raison d'être (fear not, the car still uses body-on-frame construction). Is the result worth celebrating? Is this still the chariot you would want in the Gibson Desert? Let's find out.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★☆

PROS Useful new hardware; same indestructible underpinnings; looks
CONS Nothing revolutionary under the body; uninspiring engine choice

Some context might be useful here because Toyota deploys the Land Cruiser name liberally. There are



Last one went on sale way back in 2009

three strands: Heavy Duty, Light Duty and Station Wagon. In the UK, we've always been able to discard the first of those. Heavy Duties are the ones you often see in Africa and the Middle East – angular 'J70' cars that have been in production since the 1980s but don't meet European emissions regulations.

It's the other two models that UK buyers have often had access to, with the Light Duty most notably represented by the old Land Cruiser Colorado and the larger Station Wagon given the Amazon suffix. Back in the 1990s and 2000s they were mechanically separate, but a degree of convergence has since taken place. Today, the 250 Series Land Cruiser tested here (Light Duty) and the epic 300 Series (Station Wagon) both use the same GA-F platform and are similar in footprint and off-road ability. This is just as well given that only the 250 is currently available in the UK.

So what are we dealing with here? A full-size off-roader, for one thing. In length and height the Land Cruiser 250 sits between the Jeep Wrangler and the monumental Defender 110, and is closer to the Land Rover. The striking geometry of the body (straight lines are useful when you're off-roading but also reference the early Land Cruisers) only enhances the size of the 250, though look closely and you'll see that the corners are to some extent chamfered, to improve manoeuvrability. Even so, the Toyota generally trails its close rivals when it comes to approach and departure angles, especially with that chunky rear overhang. To improve visibility, the A-pillars are also more upright than on this car's predecessor, and the beltline is stepped, dropping at the front. A number of the body panels are made to be deformable, too, so that they can stand up to being bashed about, and if the bumper does need replacing, it can be done in sections.

Mechanically the Land Cruiser remains what you might call 'proper'. It still has a ladder-frame chassis (now 50% more torsionally rigid than before, thanks to 84 extra spot welds and plenty of new adhesive bonding) and a live rear axle, but it's no Luddite and borrows some innovations from the 300, as well as carving its own technological path forward. This is the first Land Cruiser to use electric power steering, which ought to make it easier to place on the road. It also has a disconnectable front anti-roll bar, which can increase wheel articulation by 10% (to add to the 10% by which the new car already improves on its predecessor).

Elsewhere, four-wheel drive still comes courtesy of a Torsen centre differential, while the electric locking rear diff has not only been strengthened but also now uses a solenoid-type actuation instead of a motor, which makes for an 85%-quicker response time and



■ Split-opening tailgate comes in handy given the broad arc the tailgate proper moves through if ever you need to open it. It's not an inexpensive feature to offer – note the twin struts – and BMW has nixed it from the latest 5 Series Touring, much to the dismay of many.



■ Squared-off and high-set LED headlights are smart, with the fogs set deep into the bodywork below, to minimise the potential for damage. Those who secured a First Edition Land Cruiser get round headlights instead. They pay tribute to the J40 car of 1960.

improved reliability.

All of this does not come lightly. With its 80-litre tank brimmed, our test car trod the scales at 2503kg. In fairness, this is only 103kg more than the Land Cruiser D-4D LC5 we tested in 2009 (this for the first outing of the 250's forebear), despite the newer car carrying far greater levels of equipment.

INTERIOR

★★★★☆

PROS Straightforward layout; sturdy construction; passably lavish
CONS ADAS menus frustrate; doesn't always feel like £80k worth

Climb up into the cabin (this really is one of those SUVs that makes you grateful for the side steps) and things are a magnitude more modern than in the outgoing car.

Here you'll find a pair of 12.3in screens and generally a fresh feel, with strong lines and a clear layout. It is not luxurious, and perhaps should feel a little more special given the asking price, but neither is it cheap or unpleasant. Crucially, you needn't nanny the place – the finishings are generally soft but any mud or grit will easily wipe off. You'll also find the usual A-pillar ►

1 There's a bounty of physical switches in here, including buttons for the new disconnectable anti-roll bars and the rear differential lock, plus a rocker for the low-range gearbox setting.

2 The layout is functional to its core, with a faintly retro feel extending to the 12.3in digital instrument binnacle, with its simple white script and, if you want it, big tach front and centre.

3 In the front there are no fewer than three USB-C ports as well as an HDMI port, which allows you to connect a smartphone to the central display and use streaming services.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT A Steering offset 0mm B Brake offset 40mm right C Accelerator offset 190mm right. Driving position is more car-like than Land Cruisers have often espoused and nicely aligned but still feels commanding and comfy, with well-spaced pedals for big boots.

◀ grab handles and kneepads, as well as padded sills atop the door cards (ideal for a resting forearm), which set the tone.

Toyota says it was important to maintain buttons for all the essential functions, so that you can still operate them when wearing gloves or while being jostled off road. That approach begins with the proper 'shove it backwards and forwards' lever for the gearbox, dotted about which you'll find the car's myriad off-road switchgear. There's also an array of physical switchgear for the climate controls, as well as the heated and ventilated (and very comfortable) seats, which now have slimmer backs to yield more second-row leg room.

The multimedia is Toyota's usual unit, which offers smartphone pairing and feels very slick inside a car of this rugged ilk. The digital gauge cluster, too, is familiar from other Toyotas, and is clear and configurable, if a bit fiddly to adjust, particularly concerning the ADAS.

Having grown slightly in length, the Land Cruiser offers even more generous rear seat space and an electrically operated third row of seats that give surprisingly generous leg room, though adults are still unlikely to appreciate

being stashed away back here for anything more than local journeys.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

PROS Mechanical updates offer better control; improved gearbox
CONS Lacks simple performance; still faintly agricultural at times

The Land Cruiser's engine takes the form of a 2755cc four-cylinder turbo diesel with just 201bhp but 369lb ft of torque, all of it available from 1600rpm. It's paired with a new eight-speed automatic gearbox with a multi-plate lock-up clutch aimed at improving drivability and economy. There's a lock-up control function, too, that can be used at low speeds to give the driver greater control over the flow of torque. To that end, this gearbox also has a new 'dynamic damper structure' that reduces torque fluctuations to the driveshaft, again improving control, especially when off road.

So, too, has Toyota closed up the gear ratios compared with the outgoing car, to improve both straight-line performance and smoothness as the 'box shifts between gears (the rev drops are notably smaller). Shifts are also said to be 25% quicker than before.

Even so, the Land Cruiser will feel a bit agricultural to anybody coming from, say, a six-spot Defender. The diesel motor has a rugged burble to it and the gearbox is effective but ponderous compared with less serious SUVs, as you would expect.

In any case, there's reasonably good drivability here, and so the sense of rusticity that pervades is the necessary by-product of having a driveline that is functional to its core, being designed to propel the Land Cruiser over nearly any terrain without added complication. Just don't be under any illusions. A driveline this tough is always going to give you the odd jolt in low-speed manoeuvring, and isn't immune to shunt even when you're up and running. It's the price you pay for rock-solid mechanicals.

The lack of performance isn't quite so easy to justify at this price, and may prompt habitual owners to look back wistfully at V8-fired Land Cruisers of the past. The new car, with its 86bhp per tonne, needs 10.3sec to reach 60mph and feels predictably laboured under full throttle. But what about all that torque? The 10.8sec time for the 30-70mph dash in fourth gear is slower than all its direct rivals, though access to 369lb ft at just 1600rpm

makes light work of towing and other arduous tasks, and history suggests this 'IGD-FTV' unit should be bulletproof in terms of reliability.

OFF ROAD

★★★★☆

PROS New chassis hardware; great visibility; tough ladder frame
CONS Off-road geometry could be better; easily controllable driveline

For all its on-road limitations, off road there isn't much the Land Cruiser can't handle. With 4WD low-range engaged (via a neat new rocker switch) and the systems in Mud mode, you can turn on Crawl Control. The latter is effectively off-road cruise control that tries to maintain a set speed, which you can vary by twisting the drive mode switch. So configured, the Land Cruiser drags itself up and down slopes and through water troughs while you simply steer. The hardcore off-road enthusiast may enjoy the lever-pulling in an old Defender, but for everyone else this is mighty convenient. Traversing axle-articulating courses, wading deep water and negotiating steep, slippery slopes, the Land Cruiser feels slightly more effortless than even the bigger-

lunge Ineos Grenadier, and matches the capabilities of the world-class new Defender in most ways, except perhaps wading, where its 700mm potential is dwarfed by the air-sprung Brit's 900mm, and approach/departure angles. The disconnectable front anti-roll bar also makes a meaningful difference in terms of maintaining traction when one of the front wheels is at an extreme level of climb.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★★☆

PROS Steers much better than it did; doesn't mind motorway work

CONS Ladder chassis still apparent; ride quality in general; body roll

This is again a story of two halves, where the drawbacks experienced during on-road driving are repaid with interest once you get into the rough stuff. Nonetheless, one has to imagine that Land Cruisers in the UK will be driven mostly on sealed surfaces, so it matters how well, or otherwise, the car handles unadventurous environments.

The positives here are that the handling is good enough for the driver to feel confident putting the car down any road at reasonable speed. Indeed, for a proper body-on-frame creation, the latest Land Cruiser represents something of a high-water mark in this respect, not least because its light, electrically assisted rack-and-pinion steering is well sped and decently responsive. It's a world away from the vague, inconsistent helm of the Grenadier, if not quite so smooth and intuitively weighted as that of the new Defender (which now benefits hugely from an aluminium monocoque, similar to that of the Range Rover, no less).

Body control is relaxed, with plenty of heave to contend with, especially on undulating roads. Toyota offers the Land Cruiser with adaptive dampers in other markets, but UK cars get passive dampers and, with so much suspension travel in the mix, there are limits to what can realistically be achieved in terms of vertical control. Given the otherwise high specification of UK cars, the lack of a cleverer damper seems a glaring omission. As for air springs, as the Defender gets? Not tough enough, Toyota reckons.

When you combine the car's roll and heave with a somewhat brittle secondary ride (expect a degree of crashing and shimmying over poorly surfaced roads) and a rigid back axle that doesn't always feel entirely obedient through direction changes, the result is a car that feels quite a bit less cohesive than the Defender, and certainly your mainstream SUVs. You need to dial into its size and pronounced movements, and get some feel for how it likes to be tipped into bends and fed out of them. It takes some acclimatisation, but do this and the Land Cruiser proves comfortable

and controllable for a car of its type. Pick-up truck owners looking for something a little more refined would do well to try the Toyota out.

As for noise, that workhorse diesel motor, an upright windscreen and vast, square wing mirrors ensure the Land Cruiser isn't what you would call quiet at speed. At 70mph we recorded a 65dBA noise reading, which is notably louder than even the Defender Octa with all-season BF Goodrich tyres (our test Land Cruiser wore road-leaning Dunlops). However, the Toyota is better mannered than the Grenadier, and makes decently short work of long journeys on smooth motorways, where its eight-way power-adjustable seats (which also have good lumbar support) and fine forward visibility come to the fore.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★★☆

PROS Well equipped; easy enough to live with; nice colour palette

CONS More expensive than a Defender; not very economical

Toyota offered an early run of rather charming First Edition cars that had circular headlights and a contrast roof to reference the original Land Cruiser 40. These are now sold out, and the only trim is Invincible, which also comes very well equipped, as you would hope it to, with a starting price of £78k.

That price puts the Land Cruiser on a par with the Grenadier, but makes it a notably more expensive option than a six-cylinder MHEV diesel Defender in a sensible trim level. A 110 D250 X-Dynamic, with a Meridian sound system and panoramic roof, costs around £69k, and makes a tempting alternative for anybody who isn't a Land Cruiser diehard. Jeep's Wrangler Rubicon (no longer offered in diesel form), with its removable doors and fold-down windscreen, undercuts both the Landie and the Toyota. You might also consider Toyota's Hilux, which isn't as lavish inside, and with a leaf-sprung rear is less sophisticated, but a double-cab version can be had for less than £40k and there aren't many places from which the Land Cruiser will extricate you that the Hilux won't.

As for economy, the long and short of it is that we expected a little better from the car at speed, particularly given the unromantic approach Toyota has taken in regard to engine format, and the eight-gear overdrive proudly outlined in the official literature.

An as-tested touring economy of 30.7mpg results in a generous motorway range of 540 miles, though only because of the 80-litre tank. The 'everyday' economy is better: you can expect at least 35mpg in typical daily use. That said, in our experience, six-cylinder alternatives deliver similar figures, and with greater refinement – plus, of course, performance when you need it. ►



FRONT Leg room 1110mm, head room 980mm. Land Cruisers have always had large, soft seats and this one's no different, but more supportive too.



REAR Leg room 700mm, head room 920mm. Toyota isn't quite as spacious as a Defender here, but it's still big. The 60/40 backrest tilts fore and aft too.



BOOT Length 1060–1910mm, width 1120mm, height 860mm. Toyota has a longer load bay than a Defender 110, with two extra seats, if you need them.

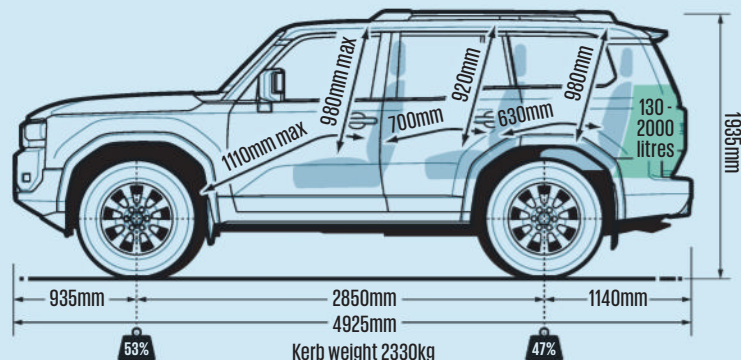


"Its light steering is well sped and decently responsive"

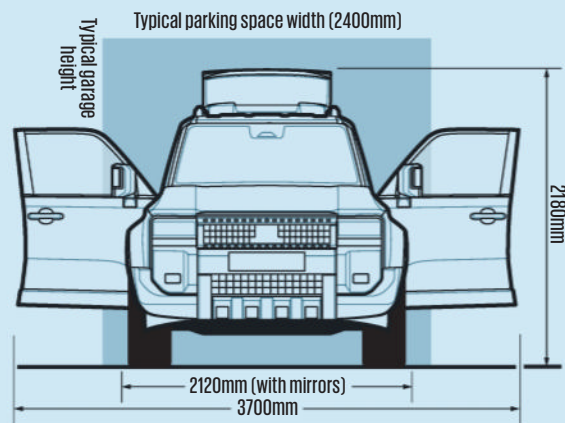
TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS

Length 4925mm **Width** 2120mm/1980mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1935mm
Door span 3700mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2180mm



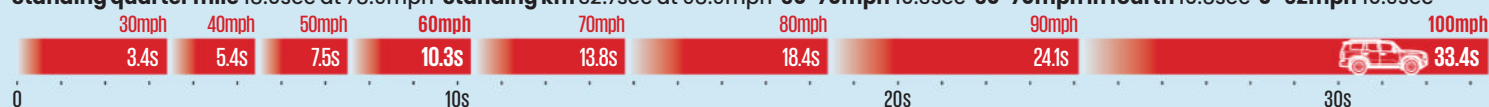
PARKING



ACCELERATION

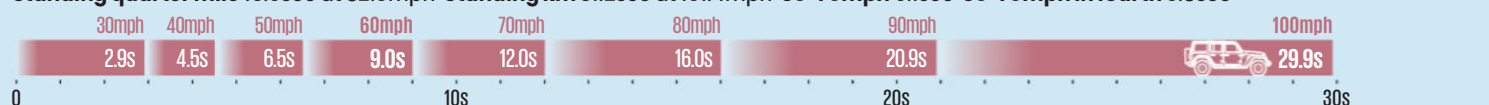
Test conditions 15deg C, dry

Standing quarter mile 18.0sec at 78.9mph **Standing km** 32.7sec at 98.9mph **30-70mph** 10.3sec **30-70mph in fourth** 10.8sec **0-62mph** 10.9sec



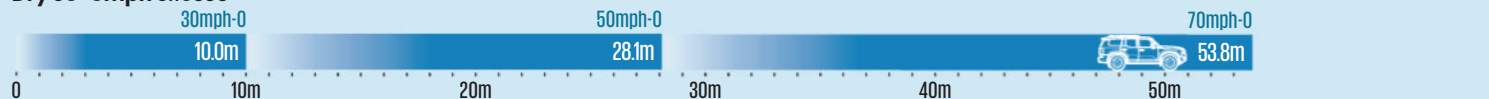
Jeep Wrangler 2.2 MultiJet-II Overland (2019, 9deg C, dry)

Standing quarter mile 16.9sec at 82.0mph **Standing km** 31.2sec at 101.4mph **30-70mph** 9.1sec **30-70mph in fourth** 9.8sec



BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 3.10sec



Wet 60-0mph 3.48sec

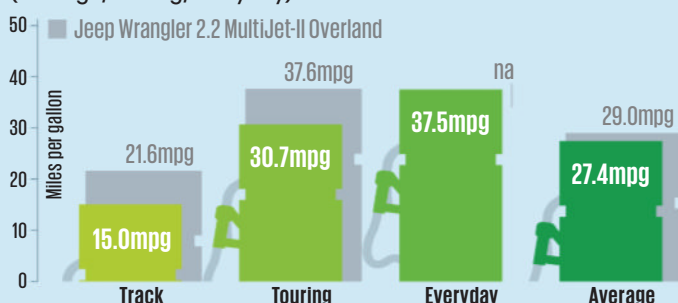


ACCELERATION IN GEAR

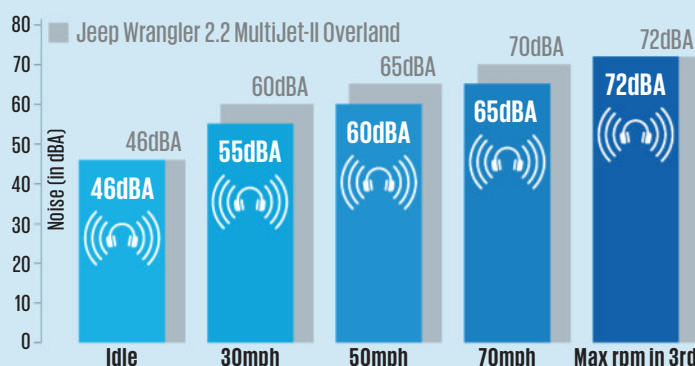
mph	Time (sec)	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
20-40	3.1	3.4						
30-50		4.0	4.5					
40-60		5.3	4.9	5.5				
50-70			6.2	6.1	7.6	11.0		
60-80				8.1	8.4	11.5		
70-90				12.4	10.1	13.2	19.0	
80-100					14.6	15.7		
90-110								
100-120								
110-130								

RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 26.4mpg (combined) **Test range** 482/540/660 miles (average/touring/everyday)

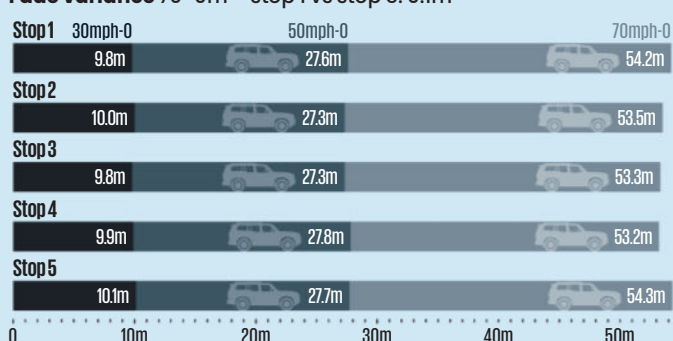


CABIN NOISE



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m - stop 1 vs stop 5: 0.1m



THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

TOYOTA LAND CRUISER 2.8 D-4D 204 INVINCIBLE

On-the-road price £77,845
Price as tested £77,845
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £43,750
Typical PCP £1165 pcm (£8000 deposit + 35 months/36,000 miles)
Insurance group 49

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard Panoramic roof, Multi-Terrain Select, Multi-Terrain Monitor, rear differential lock, stabiliser disconnection mechanism, Crawl Control, Decuma Grey paint, black side steps, 12V rear passenger socket, 220V boot socket, puddle lights, 14-speaker JBL premium sound system, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, HDMI connector, second-row climate control with ventilated seats
Also available Essential Protection Pack £275, towing hitch £629

ENGINE

Installation Front, longitudinal, 4WD
Type 4 cyls in line, 2755cc, turbocharged, diesel
Power 201bhp at 3000–3400rpm
Torque 369lb ft at 1600–2800rpm
Redline 4000rpm
Specific output 73bhp per litre
Power to weight 86bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 158lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 8-spd automatic
Ratios/mph per 1000rpm
1st 4.41/6.1 **2nd** 2.81/9.6 **3rd** 1.95/13.8
4th 1.51/17.9 **5th** 1.27/21.2 **6th** 1.00/27.0 **7th** 0.79/34.0 **8th** 0.65/41.5
Final drive ratio 3.58 **rpm in top gear at 70/80mph** 1688/1929

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Body-on-frame and steel chassis
Weight/as tested 2330kg/2503kg
Weight distribution (f/r) 53%/47%
Drag coefficient na
Wheels 8.0Jx20in
Tyres 265/60 R20 112H, Dunlop Grandtrek PT22 M+S **Spare** Full size
Fuel tank 80 litres (under rear seats, filler on nearside rear wing)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front Double wishbones, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear** Multi-link live axle, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Steering** EPAS, rack and pinion; 3.2 turns lock to lock; 12.8m turning circle

BRAKES

Front 340mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers **Rear** 335mm ventilated discs, single-piston floating calipers **Handbrake type** Electronic, automatic

EMISSIONS & TAX

CO₂ 280g/km
BIK at 20/40% pcm £480/£960

VERDICT

Tough cookie gets more kerb appeal and drivability



Again we're left wondering how to contextualise Toyota's formidable, much-loved off-roader when it comes to an Autocar star rating. The truth is that, if you really do need a tool that will get you out of any sort of trouble one moment but carry off the school run with reasonable panache the next, the J250 Land Cruiser is perhaps a five-star car. It has oceans of authenticity, with upgraded hardware to help it along the meanest off-road trails, and yet it brings easier drivability to the party too. For blending ruggedness with creature comforts, there's arguably no better 4x4. And yet, next to a Defender, the Toyota feels rudimentary, but costs notably more. If you're not planning on maximising the Land Cruiser's off-road ability, or don't necessarily need its profound toughness, it's hard to justify – if also as easy as ever to love.

TESTERS' NOTES



RICHARD LANE

I know looks shouldn't really come into the equation for a burly character like the Land Cruiser, but this latest car's styling will unquestionably help it sell in a tough fight with the Defender. We had a lot of interest from the kerbside.



MATT SAUNDERS

This test has focused more on the Land Cruiser's appeal as an on-road proposition, but nobody should be doubting its off-road credentials. Earlier this year we put it up against a Defender and a Grenadier in pretty extreme off-road conditions and it was totally unfazed.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Clattery diesel is a bit of a letdown in the broader context of this car's appeal. Can we have a V6 next time?
- Continue to work on fidgety road manners.
- ADAS controls...

RANKING RIVALS



LAND ROVER DEFENDER D250 X-DYNAMIC SE
Simply the complete package. Polished on-road dynamics put it above others.

★★★★☆
Price £69,470
Power, torque 246bhp, 420lb ft
0-62mph, top speed 7.9sec, 117mph
CO₂, economy 225g/km, 32.8mpg



JEEP WRANGLER RUBICON GME
Still the benchmark for rock-crawling and better than ever on sealed roads, if also still a bit basic.

★★★★☆
Price £65,870
Power, torque 268bhp, 295lb ft
0-62mph, top speed 7.6sec, 99mph
CO₂, economy 269g/km, 23.7mpg



FORD RANGER RAPTOR
Ford's fruity V6 mill shows what the Land Cruiser is missing, especially in terms of performance.

★★★★☆
Price £52,140
Power, torque 288bhp, 362lb ft
0-62mph, top speed 7.9sec, 111mph
CO₂, economy 315g/km, 20.5mpg



INEOS GRENAIER TRIALMASTER
Wheel articulation and rather a lot of charm can't make up for agricultural driving dynamics.

★★★★☆
Price £76,620
Power, torque 282bhp, 332lb ft
0-62mph, top speed 8.6sec, 99mph
CO₂, economy 325g/km, 19.6mpg



DACIA BIGSTER 130 4x4 EXTREME
Clearly not a proper rival for the others, but no lame duck and decent to drive. Road test soon.

★★★★☆
Price £28,965
Power, torque 129bhp, 170lb ft
0-62mph, top speed 11.2sec, 112mph
CO₂, economy 137g/km, 46.3mpg



AUTOCAR ROAD TEST 5750

BENTLEY FLYING SPUR

Super-saloon begins post-W12 era with even more power and luxury

Zuffenhausen old boy and recently installed CEO at Bentley Motors, the estimable Frank-Steffen Walliser, recently spoke to us about making “something more extreme”.

Settling into his new role after 29 years with Porsche, the German was hinting at future models that could bring added excitement to the traditional Bentley way of doing things (911 GT3 RS treatment for the Conti GT, anyone?), but he could just as well have been talking about the super-saloon he’s just launched.

You’re looking at the latest Flying Spur, which now comes exclusively in V8 hybrid flavour and with no shortage of horsepower in any form, but especially in top-billing Speed

guise, as we have here. This car puts out as near as dammit 800bhp and thus comfortably outguns its 6.0-litre W12 predecessor. The old Speed had to make do with 626bhp, a figure that hardly needed a bump of nearly 25%, but when electrically generated power comes relatively easily, why on earth wouldn’t you?

It’s a thought-provoking level of shove for a car that, despite its quietly driver-oriented bent, will serve most owners purely as a luxury conveyance, shuttling them about the world’s more salubrious postcodes in comfort and style.

And, more than ever, in silence. Launched in tandem with the new Continental GT – also a PHEV – the revised Flying Spur has an

official electric range of 47 miles, which is almost double that of the previous car. This ought to play to the Spur’s strengths in a way that perhaps eludes its more sporting coupé sibling, though as ever does come with a considerable weight penalty. At 2571kg the PHEV Speed is the heaviest Flying Spur to date, and it’s this, along with the fact that the W12 is now off the menu on legislative grounds, that may explain why Bentley has chosen to launch its ‘four-door grand tourer’ with headline-grabbing figures of 772bhp and 738lb ft.

There is, of course, rather more to this car than epic power and torque, so let’s find out if the fastest, most advanced Spur yet is also the best.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★☆

PROS V8 alive and well in the new PHEV Spur; inimitable presence

CONS Even heavier than claimed

The Flying Spur hasn’t adopted the new bladed headlights seen on the revamped Continental GT and so it isn’t quite as simple to identify a facelifted car from the original Mk3 launched in 2019. Indeed, in terms of exterior design, it’s 95% unchanged from before, with the classic quad-headlights kept on.

The big news is the Speed’s adoption of Bentley’s ‘Ultra Performance Hybrid’ powertrain, which sees a 188bhp, 332lb ft permanent magnet synchronous

MODEL TESTED BENTLEY FLYING SPUR SPEED FIRST EDITION

Price £226,500

Power 772bhp

Torque 738lb ft

0-60mph 3.2sec

30-70mph 2.7sec

Top speed 177mph (claimed)

Average economy 22.0mpg

Electric range 44 miles

CO₂ emissions 33g/km

70-0mph 41.5m (10deg C, dry)

1 Flying Spur retains plenty of solid-feeling switchgear on both the transmission tunnel and the wheel spokes. Few cars now offer such easy control in the cockpit.

2 Speed grade has sporty veneers such as the turned aluminium seen here or high-gloss carbon. Mulliner-and Azure-spec Spurs can be had with wood, among other materials.

3 More car makers would do well to imitate Bentley's approach to mode selection: slot the rotary dial to 'Bentley' mode for the engineers' optimum set-up.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT A Steering offset 5mm left B Brake offset 60mm right C Accelerator offset 190mm right. Driving position has a very slight offset but not enough to irk. Otherwise? Commanding.

but still found under the boot with an attached 48V loom to drive the active anti-roll bars, rear steering and three-chamber air springs.

If you think all that sounds heavy, you'd be right. The V6 hybrid Spur we tested in 2022 weighed 2596kg with its 80-litre tank full, and the new car – with its extra cylinders and battery capacity – sees that figure grow to 2750kg, though the neat 48:52 front-to-rear distribution hasn't gone anywhere. The Bentley comes in nearly 100kg heavier than the similarly conceived, similarly lavish and similarly V8 hybrid Mercedes-AMG S63 E Performance.

The new Speed's contact patch is commensurately epic, especially in the context of a fast saloon. The combination of 315-section rear Pirellis and 275-section fronts is identical to that of the Continental GT (the new BMW M5, for reference, is booted with 295-sections at the back), ensuring that the AWD system has plenty to work with.

The Flying Spur also gets a version of the new twin-chamber air springs already seen on the Conti GT (the old cars used a triple-chamber spring), which are said to offer even greater control over rebound and compression movements. There's a new calibration for the ESC, which works alongside the car's electronically controlled limited-slip differential and brake-based torque vectoring across the axle.

INTERIOR

★★★★★

PROS Material lavishness few others can match; space; solid switchgear
CONS Hybrid system eats into boot space

Bentley has resisted the temptation to maximise digital real estate for this facelifted Spur, and the cockpit is as fabulous to be in as ever, managing to come across as both sporting and opulent in a manner no other car maker quite achieves. Naturally it's very similar to that of the new Conti GT, and as with that car the Speed gets darker brightwork and black matt plastic that feels impressively expensive. Our test car's turned-aluminium trim certainly caught the eye as well, and it's also possible to have the Spur with a Côtes de Genève finish, which looks spectacular.

Take it as read that the Spur ticks every box for ergonomics, comfort and oddment storage, and there are also plenty of USB-C ports.

In the back, by our tape measure the Spur's leg room isn't quite as generous as the Rolls-Royce Ghost's, but this is academic because both cars are supremely capacious. If you opt for the four-seat configuration, the Spur has the sweeter-sculpted rear berths. They come with Auto Climate, which monitors the humidity and temperature of the surface and adjusts the heating and ventilation to maintain comfort. ►



■ You can quickly identify the Speed because of its dark brightwork, which extends to the retractable (and illuminated) 'Flying B' at the prow of that endless bonnet.



■ The updated Continental GT has a striking new headlight design but the Spur retains the old style, with four roundels and the rather lovely cut-crystal effect behind the lens.

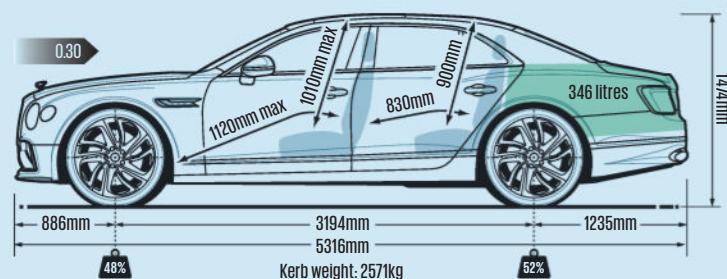
motor sit between an eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox from ZF and a 592bhp, 590lb ft 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8. Though similar on paper, this isn't quite the same V8 that has appeared in the Flying Spur in the past, not least because it no longer features cylinder deactivation and switches to mono-scroll turbochargers rather than the twin-scroll blowers used previously. That new-found electrical assistance negates the need for either tech, providing both all-electric running capability and so-called torque-fill that provides response while the turbochargers are spooling up.

The motor is fed by a 25.9kWh battery, 43% larger in capacity than that used for the old V6 hybrid Spur,

TEST RESULTS

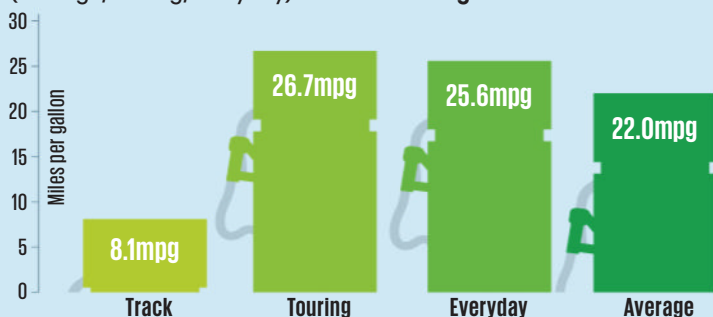
DIMENSIONS

Length 5316mm **Width** 2220mm/1988mm (with/without mirrors)
Height 1474mm **Door span** na **Max height to open bootlid** 1820mm



RUNNING EFFICIENCY

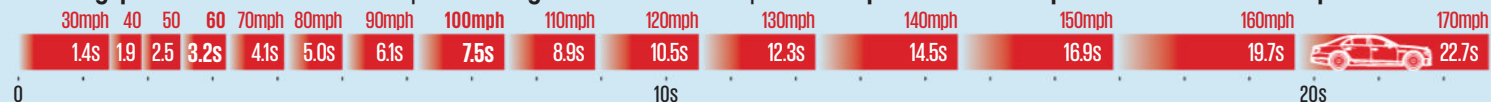
WLTP 202mpg (combined) **Test range** 387/470/450 miles (average/touring/everyday) **Electric test range** 44 miles



ACCELERATION

Test conditions 10deg C, dry

Standing quarter mile 11.5sec at 125.8mph **Standing km** 20.7sec at 163.1mph **30-70mph** 2.7sec **30-70mph in fourth** 5.0sec **0-62mph** 3.4sec



BRAKING

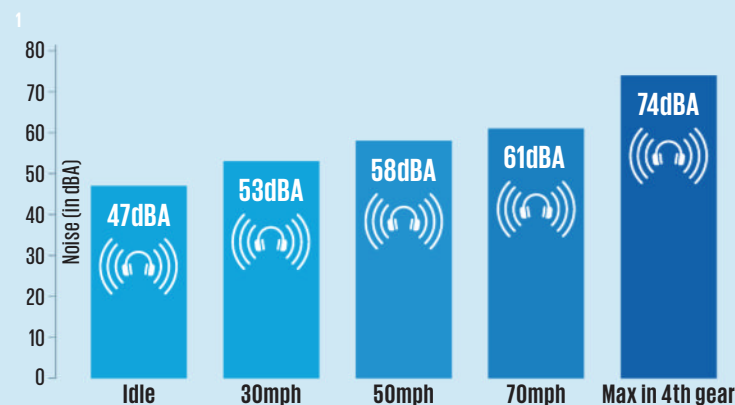
Dry 60-0mph 2.44sec



Wet 60-0mph 2.82sec



CABIN NOISE



MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

BENTLEY FLYING SPUR SPEED FIRST EDITION

On-the-road price £226,500
Price as tested £291,390
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £132,700
Insurance group 50

HYBRID POWERTRAIN

Engine Front, longitudinal, 4WD
Type V8, 3996cc, twin-turbo, petrol; 592bhp, 590lb ft
Motor Permanent magnet synchronous motor, gearbox-mounted; 188bhp, 332lb ft
Battery 25.9/22.0kWh (total/usable)
Total power 772bhp
Total torque 738lb ft
Power to weight 300bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 287lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 8-spd dual-clutch auto **rpm in top gear at 70/80mph** 1336/1527

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel and aluminium monocoque **Weight/as tested** 2571kg/2750kg **Wheels** 9.5Jx22in (f), 11.0Jx22in (r) **Tyres** 275/35 ZR22 104Y (f), 315/30 ZR22 107Y (r), Pirelli P Zero **Fuel tank** 80 litres

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front Double wishbones, air springs, active anti-roll bar **Rear** Multi-link, air springs, active anti-roll bar **Steering** EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.4 turns lock to lock; 12.4m turning circle

"At higher speeds, the Flying Spur is, quite simply, majestic"



THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

◀ Postural Adjust then uses a number of air cushions to subtly vary the pressure on your legs and back throughout the journey. It is, in short, a wonderful place to let the miles go by.

Elsewhere, one thing to note about the PHEV Spur is that boot space is compromised, on account of the battery back. It falls from 420 litres in the regular V8 car to just 346 litres, some of which is then taken up by the charge cable case.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

PROS No shortage of pace; electric portion generally well integrated

CONS Soft brakes; unintuitive regenerative braking calibration

In mechanical terms, the Bentley's most direct rival is Mercedes-AMG's formidable 791bhp V8 hybrid S63 E Performance. Though less powerful, if only by a whisker, and heavier, the Brit is still the quicker car off the mark, needing just 3.2sec to surge to 60mph versus 3.5sec for the Merc. Indeed, the four-door Bentley trails its coupé sibling only by a tenth, though the gap does grow as speed piles on, and by 150mph the Spur is a good few car lengths behind the Conti GT Speed. All three are monstrously quick.

In terms of character, electric assistance gives the Spur rather a profound duality. On one side there's all-electric running, and that certainly suits this lavish limousine, even if the performance on offer is modest, and best deployed mainly in urban environments.

Then, of course, there are those moments of full-throttle attack, when the bassy V8 makes itself fully known, and the meat of its torque delivery is faintly heralded by some electric torque-fill, which as you would expect gives the Spur cleaner accelerator response than it has ever known. This is true whether you're asking for everything this powertrain has or you just want to indulge in gentle roll-on shove. Certainly, the calibration of two power sources is more neatly managed here than in the AMG.

At least, it is for acceleration. The regenerative element of the braking system gives the pedal a softer, less precise action than you'd expect from a performance brand like Bentley, and its predictive actions – slowing the car down automatically for traffic and roundabouts etc – don't chime with the thick-set, linear, intuitive sense of control associated with Crewe's wares.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★★☆

PROS Supreme stability; easy to place; confidence-inspiring

CONS Cornering poise not as natural as some; low-speed ride

The Flying Spur Speed doesn't have the incisive handling of its cousin, Porsche's Panamera Turbo

E-Hybrid, and neither, frankly, would you want it to. Its cornering balance is steady and uneventful, majoring more on insouciance than engagement, with plenty of stability on offer, aided by that vast wheelbase and enormous contact patch. There's accuracy too. The ease with which the Spur can be placed can be confounding at times, especially when the suspension control is at its tightest, when body roll is neatly managed but never locked down needlessly tightly.

We can't help feeling there's more to come here, though. The steering – sweetly sped, nicely weighted – would benefit from a stronger sense of mechanical connection. And while it sounds fatuous to say it of a 2.7-tonne, 5.3m-long limousine, a little more intent in the handling balance wouldn't go amiss. After all,

we know what Bentley is capable of, and while the Spur is broadly speaking the most engaging car in the super-luxury saloon segment, there are times when an S63 E Performance scythes through bends with just a little more poise. This is, after all, a Speed derivative.

And what about luxury? There's no shortage of it, especially at higher speeds, where the Spur is, quite simply, majestic. A noise recording of 61dBA at 70mph beats that of even the pure-electric Mercedes EQS 450+ Business Class. The Bentley is exceptionally quiet, and supremely cossetting. Its only slight failing concerns lower-speed ride quality on more threadbare surfaces. Perhaps the Speed's 22in wheels are to blame, but on occasion the Spur just wasn't as unruffled as expected.



VERDICT

Hulking V8 hybrid powertrain broadens Spur's remit and skyrockets performance

★★★★☆

In the past, if you wanted your Bentley limousine with EV capability, you needed to settle for a V6 under the long bonnet. With this update, the Flying Spur loses the option of W12 power but gains a considerable amount of real-world electric range and pairs that with a charismatic V8 guaranteed to put a smile on your face. All said, we consider that a good deal for customers: the Spur is now a quicker, more versatile car than ever – and an expanded range of interesting, wonderfully tactile interior trim certainly doesn't hurt its case. Only a couple of slight dynamic foibles blot its copybook.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★★☆

PROS Decent EV range; usefully undercuts Rolls' Ghost on price
CONS Options really do add up

The Flying Spur Speed starts at £226,500, making it around 10% more expensive than the pre-update, W12-engined Speed, and things can escalate from there – this car has £60k of optional extras. Even so, the car seems reasonably priced, splitting AMG's S63, which it trounces for materials quality, and the Rolls-Royce Ghost above it (opt for a £244k-plus Mulliner-grade car to have the Spur at its most lavish).

Chauffeurs driving in and around cities can expect to return around 2.0mpkWh, for an EV range of 44 miles. For touring duties, expect 470 miles or so from the 80-litre tank. **A**

RIVALS

1



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★★★★☆

2

BENTLEY FLYING SPUR

3



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4



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RICHARD LANE

Testing, testing

Cars are always on the lookout these days – and too many think drivers aren't doing likewise



Last week we had a 'situation' on the road test desk. Nothing serious, just a logistical mess, but the eventual solution involved me blagging a lift up to MIRA from one of my What Car? colleagues. George kindly bent his run from Brixton to the M1, passing through not just Finchley but also Archway, which is where I was waiting at the kerbside, crummy old road test backpack stuffed with the essentials: tape measure, gaffer tape, telemetry gear and very old, if-it-ain't-broke laptop running VBox data-logging software.

The London-to-MIRA dash is one I do once or twice weekly. Three times if the proverbial hits the fan. Like a lot of this job, it's a journey passed in solitude, so it was nice not only to be driven by somebody else but for it to be decent company, as George is. He bought an L322 in his early twenties so, in terms of raw tolerance for car-based financial turmoil, is up there with the best of us, only recently swapping the Rangie for a Mk5 Golf GTI (five doors, big teledial wheels, red: not my dream spec but still a lovely thing).

Playing passenger was enlightening. Free to observe, I could readily appreciate how much George was suffering at the hands of our car's ADAS, which were running amok in London traffic. No sooner had the lane keeping assistance made itself known than the road sign recognition would go off, then the driver attention monitor would extract its pound. I sat there thinking: this is what a dogfight sounds like when the entire squadron of enemy fighters achieve lock-on.

At this point I need to make it clear that George appeared to be doing nothing wrong. He seemed

"Poor George had the temerity to glance sideways at an HGV"

to be operating slickly in London traffic, which is, of course, as much art as science. There's give and take in the melee, but these systems don't allow for that. They operate in a binary world where everything has a defined scope. At one point the driver monitoring went loco purely because poor George had had the temerity to glance out of the side window at an HGV speeding up to the dotted lines at a T-junction. Sensible to keep an eye on that sort of thing, no?

So it was interesting to be removed from the role of ADAS victim. A bit like the loved one who gets bullied by their boss but can't quite see it and muddles through, only when you witness somebody else getting harried by these systems can you appreciate just how overwhelming it is. They go off constantly, chip, chip, chipping away.

I will say this, though: while they're all subject to the same regulations and are all to an extent very annoying, these systems do work in subtly different ways, and that is starting to matter.

By MIRA, the two of us had reached the conclusion that we're not far from ADAS behaviour being a part of the brand-loyalty equation. Performance, design, practicality and price are all big decision-influencing areas when it comes to car buying, but none of them are going to matter if the thing drives you up the wall every

time you want to pop down to the shops.

Two things particularly matter: the manner of the intervention (everything from the timbre of the bong to the pick-up of steering auto action) and how simple the systems are to disable. Some manufacturers do get it. They tend to be the ones that have traditionally put the driver first. BMW, for example, has a superbly gentle lane keeping action and lets you curtail the speed limit warning with one push on the wheel (seriously, who can stand bings going off at 52mph in a 50mph zone when, as every road tester can confirm, you're really doing only 49.5mph?).

And with the launch of the Vantage Roadster, Aston Martin has introduced a physical ADAS shortcut button, right next to the exhaust and damping switches. To them, it's that important.

On the other side of the equation there is Toyota. God I love Toyota, from Yaris to Land Cruiser, but its current, faintly paranoid ADAS are just infuriating. There's even an alert to tell you when another car is wafting up behind you. Gratuitous or what? Would I like to take a break, as it suggests, 12 minutes into my trip? No, but I might like to steer off that cliff. The 'off' switches are also buried in fiddly menus and you can't access them on the move. Not sure I'd buy one.

Or the Ford Mustang, whose conversion for Europe has been done with such cavalier ADAS coding that the display often erroneously pops off a 'hands on the wheel' bong on the motorway. I couldn't live with the aggravation. Not for £75k.

It makes an extended physical test drive more crucial than ever, because it's not just the driver these things annoy but the sorry passengers too.

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A red Skoda Enyaq Coupé is shown driving on a paved road that curves to the right. The road is flanked by large, mature trees with dense green foliage. The car is in motion, as indicated by the blurred background and the license plate 'KY25 OWC'. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

The tweaked shall inherit the earth

In a bid to win sales, Tesla's popular Model Y has been revised – and so has the Skoda Enyaq Coupé. **JAMES DISDALE** sizes them up

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EDLESTON

T

esla's in a spot of bother. So far this year, its sales across Europe have dropped by around 45% and profits have taken an even more vertiginous slump of 71%. Adding to its woes was the news last month

that it was forced to issue its eighth (yes, you read that right) recall of its cubist Cybertruck, this time to remedy its propensity for shedding stainless steel bodywork.

So what's going on? If you look at many of the headlines, the finger points directly at the company's controversialist CEO, Elon Musk. His appetite for attracting attention of the wrong kind certainly hasn't helped lure customers into showrooms – although it has created a cottage industry in 'not in my name' bumper

stickers – but as ever the answer is, well, more complicated than that.

For starters, there's the current tariff situation. Then there's the fact that Tesla is actually more of a tech company than a car firm, which brings its own challenges. Like a smartphone manufacturer, it's all about the software, and in this respect it's one of the best in the business, streets ahead of the legacy brands (and that also includes its understanding of battery chemistry).

Yet this means it doesn't follow some of the tried and tested methods of the established practitioners, such as model cycles that include visually appealing mid-life refreshes designed to persuade people to part with their cash for cars that might otherwise be getting close to their sell-by date.

By contrast, Tesla's line-up comes across visually as a bit old hat, as if the company has been peddling the same, unchanged product

from day one. The recent Model 3 'Highland' is a case in point. It's a thoroughly overhauled car, but to the casual observer it could just as easily be the 2017 original.

The same can be said of the Model S and Model X, which have both benefited from top to bottom technical titivation but are indistinguishable from their decade-old progenitors. However, the stakes are higher for the Model Y, which is the brand's best-seller and until very recently topped the sales charts across Europe. As a result, Tesla has taken a leaf out of rivals' books and delivered a facelift that will leave buyers in no doubt this is a box-fresh proposition.

Speaking of which, the Tesla isn't the only family-sized all-electric EV to have gone under the knife. The Skoda Enyaq Coupé (and its more sensible SUV sibling) has always been one of our favourite protagonists in this corner of the market, and five years on from its debut the ►



◀ Czech machine has been treated to the industry-standard nip and tuck.

Looks are clearly subjective but, to our eyes, Tesla's tweaks are more eye-catching. You can see the DNA of the original car between the A- and C-pillars, but at the front there's a Cybertruck-inspired nose complete with a pencil-thin LED light bar, while the rear features a neat-looking, indirectly lit, full-width tail-light. By contrast, Skoda has grafted its bold new 'Tech-Deck' nose onto the Enyaq, but the rest of the car's appearance has been left largely untouched.

It's a similar story inside, where the Skoda looks and feels very much the same as the old car. There's a revised 13in infotainment screen that looks slicker and responds more swiftly but otherwise it's business as usual. This means that, unlike in the Model Y, you do get some handy physical shortcut keys and a separate display ahead of the driver for speed and range information.

As ever, the Tesla's dashboard is dominated by its centrally mounted infotainment screen, which literally controls all of the car's major functions (although, unlike in the Model 3, there is an actual column stalk for the indicators. Hallelujah!). Still, the set-up is one of the best around, proving a doddle to navigate and always responding crisply to your demands. It's sufficiently good that you almost don't miss the odd button or two.

With its greater mix of rich materials and more complex dashboard and door mouldings, the Skoda's cabin looks a little more upmarket than the Model Y's, but in terms of touchy-feely perceived quality, there's little to separate the two. In fact, it's the uplift in solidity that you notice most in the starkly minimalist cabin of the Tesla. There are still some areas of the car that look a little hand-finished – the cheap LED spotlight in the boot and the thin fabric covering the A-pillar-mounted tweeters – but overall the Model Y is full of appealing materials and exhibits a tight fit and finish.

The Tesla also scores strongly for space and versatility, which is surely one of the biggest considerations with cars like these. There's a large load area with plenty of underfloor storage compartments, plus the trademark 117-litre frunk. (The Skoda's bonnet lifts to reveal various EV ancillaries but no space for luggage overspill from its 570-litre boot.)

Rear occupants in the Model Y also have plenty of head and leg room, while a powered reclining backrest and completely flat floor add to the feeling of comfort. What's more, the addition of a small touchscreen now allows occupants to adjust the temperature and switch



Skoda's cabin creates a slightly more upmarket ambience and is roomy



Quick steering and a more rear-biased drive set-up make the Tesla seem agile

“The Enyaq is no slouch but it’s left gasping in the Model Y’s wake on a straight road”



on their heated seats without having to issue orders to the driver.

Up front, the sense of space is enhanced by the low scuttle and large windscreen, which helps deliver a more panoramic view of the road than in the Skoda. However, this Sportline-trim Enyaq hits back with heavily bolstered front seats that offer greater support.

Grab the tape measure and you’ll find the Enyaq pretty much matches the Model Y for accommodation. Where the Skoda edges ahead is in those thoughtful details that have become a calling card for the Czech brand, such as the umbrellas secreted in the front doors and the multitude of handy boot dividers, hooks and nets. That said, you’re unlikely to run out of room for odds and ends in the Model Y, with its large, carpeted door bins, cupholders galore and a lidded cubby between the front seats that’s so deep you’ll need to send Lassie for help if you ever fall in.

So it’s even-stevens for practicality, but what about performance and poise? Once again, our two dual-motor contenders are separated by the width of a Tesla key card, but they go about their business in slightly different ways. If outright urge is your thing, though, the Model Y is a slam-dunk choice.

With 375bhp and a lower, 1997kg kerb weight, the Tesla is seriously rapid and feels especially so in Sport mode, when its throttle response is even sharper. The 282bhp Enyaq, with a claimed 0-62mph of 6.7sec, is no slouch but it’s left gasping in its rival’s wake on a straight road.

Throw some corners into the mix and there’s less clear air between the two. With its quick, albeit lifeless, steering, the Tesla feels more agile – an impression exaggerated by a rear-biased power delivery that allows you to tighten your cornering line with a dose of throttle. Special mention also has to go to the new brake-by-wire set-up, which offers a firm pedal and plenty of progression.

With its slower but better-weighted steering, the Skoda feels a little lazier in its reactions, its narrower-section front tyres gently squealing into safe understeer at the limit. Yet despite its heftier kerb weight, the Enyaq feels better tied down over bumpier stretches of Tarmac, containing body movements more effectively than the Tesla, which can hop and corkscrew a little when pressing on. Traction isn’t a problem for either all-wheel-drive vehicle.

The Skoda maintains a narrow advantage when it comes to cruising comfort. Both have firm low-speed rides – although the newly softened Tesla is much better here than its predecessor – that calm down at speed, and while each delivers decent refinement, the ►



Minimalist Tesla interior feels solidly built overall and provides good space



Skoda’s front end will tend to run wide of the apex if you push hard

“In our test, the Model Y delivered 3.8mpkWh, the Enyaq 3.4mpkWh”

◀ Enyaq does a marginally better job of isolating you from road and wind noise. You can also tailor the regen brake assistance in each – a first for Tesla – although the Model Y has a more effective one-pedal calibration.

As you would expect, both cars have driver aids galore – and you’ll be either fine or frustrated with that depending on your point of view. On the plus side, turning off the lane keeping assistance is a doddle in either car and the other systems are as unobtrusive as they get these days. Mind you, because the Model Y uses plenty of cameras (the Enyaq favours radar), its various warnings become increasingly inconsistent as each lens becomes coated with road grime.

So we have established that each of these cars is practical, delivers all the performance you’re ever likely to need and, while you’re unlikely to pick either for a dawn raid on your favourite roads, they both steer and stop with admirable accuracy and agility. Ultimately, then, it comes down to the numbers – and again the margins are tight, although the more cost-effective contender probably isn’t the one you would expect.

When it comes to claimed range, the Model Y totes a figure of 364 miles as standard, reduced to 353 miles with the optional wheels of our

test car, while the Skoda stretches to 334 miles. Thanks to Tesla’s mastery of battery chemistry, motor efficiency and (relatively) lightweight construction methods, the Model Y gets closer to its WLTP numbers in real-world use. Over the course of our test, it delivered an impressive efficiency return of 3.8mpkWh, whereas the Enyaq could manage only 3.4mpkWh.

Then there’s the thorny issue of cash. In Long Range AWD form, the Tesla’s sticker price is £51,990, a scant £1330 more than the Enyaq. Yet nobody turns up to a dealer with a suitcase full of banknotes for cars like these: they plonk down a deposit and finance the rest. Put your pen to a PCP deal and over four years you’ll shell out £499 a month for the Model Y and £527 for the Skoda. Again, not that much in it, but there’s something significant about Tesla getting one over on a brand famed for delivering value for money.

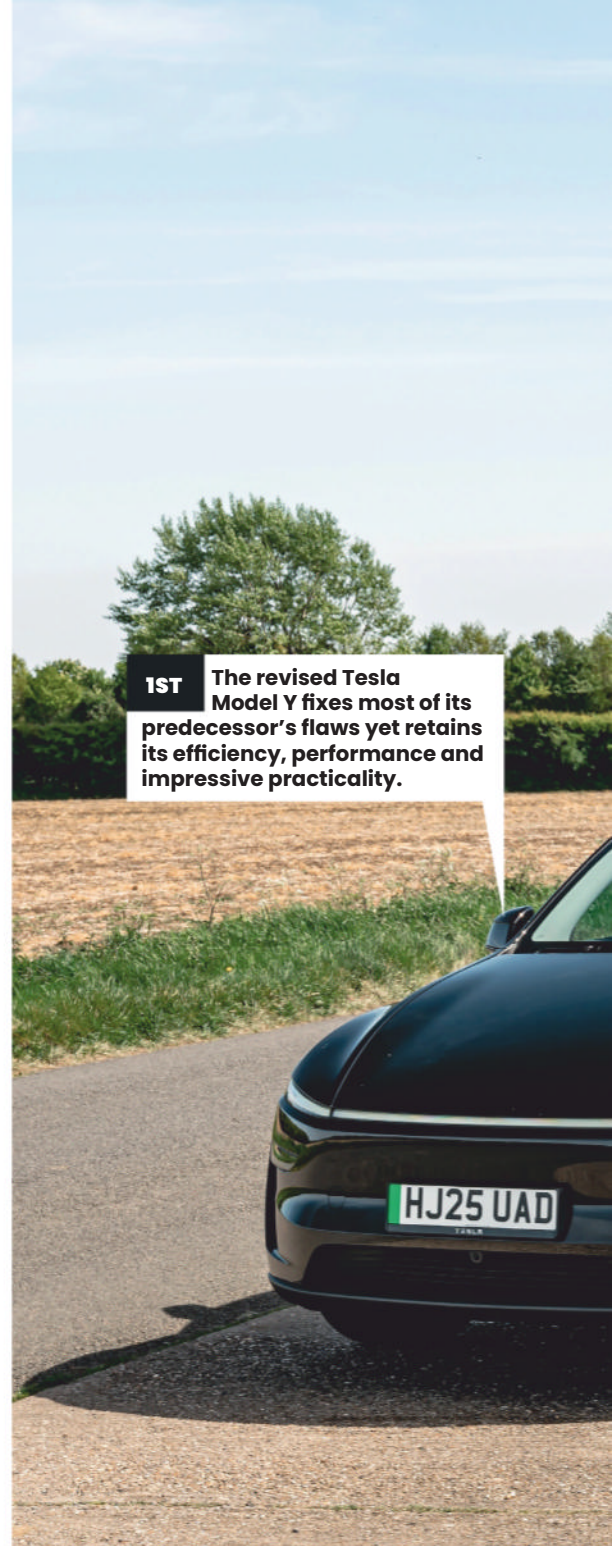
Are these cost savings enough to swing the result in favour of the Model Y? By the tightest of margins, we would say yes. Sure, Tesla has some PR issues bubbling away in the background, but as a spacious, sensible and swift family wagon that packs genuinely innovative engineering, the new Model Y makes a compelling choice. Maybe that will give Elon something to smile about. **A**



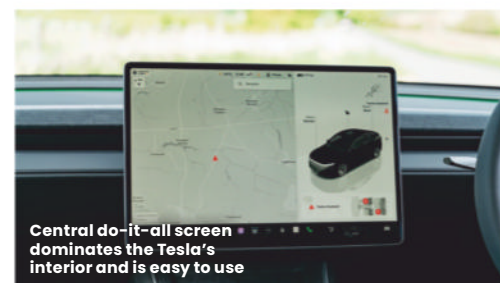
Skoda claims the Enyaq Coupé is its most aerodynamic car to date



Rear light bar and a crisper, less rounded tail are part of the Model Y’s new look



1ST The revised Tesla Model Y fixes most of its predecessor’s flaws yet retains its efficiency, performance and impressive practicality.



Central do-it-all screen dominates the Tesla’s interior and is easy to use



As well as this large hold in the Model Y, there’s storage below it and a 117-litre frunk



	TESLA MODEL Y LONG RANGE AWD	SKODA ENYAQ COUPE 85x SPORTLINE
Rating	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
Price	£51,990	£50,660
Engine	Asynchronous motor (front), permanent magnet synchronous motor (rear)	Asynchronous motor (front), permanent magnet synchronous motor (rear)
Power	375bhp	282bhp
Torque	364lb ft	402lb ft
Gearbox	1-spd reduction gear, 4WD	1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight	1997kg	2287kg
0-62mph	4.8sec	6.7sec
Top speed	125mph	112mph
Battery	83/78kWh (total/usable, est)	82/77kWh (total/usable)
Range	353 miles	334 miles
Economy	3.8mpkWh (as tested)	3.4mpkWh (as tested)
CO ₂ tax band	0g/km, 3%	0g/km, 3%

2ND It's a close-run thing for the Skoda Enyaq, which in facelifted form remains a refined, thoughtfully designed and thoroughly likeable car.



Enyaq's 13in touchscreen looks smarter and responds more quickly than before



Family-friendly 570 litres is available in the Skoda, plus 40/20/40-folding rear seats

THREE STANDOUT ALTERNATIVES



POLESTAR 4

'The one without a rear window' trades blows with the Tesla on performance, range and cutting-edge tech, plus its styling is arguably more distinctive. The catch? The flagship dual-motor version will set you back £67,000, which is a hefty £15,000 more than the Model Y.



VOLKSWAGEN ID 7 TOURER

If you're sick of the sight of SUVs (and why wouldn't you be?), then how about the more graceful ID 7 Tourer? It sits on the same MEB platform as the Enyaq and packs an identical 282bhp dual-motor set-up. Yet that sleek body helps to deliver a 425-mile range and a 545-litre boot.



HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N

Okay, so this is a bit of a cheat, but it can't have escaped your attention that a (very) lightly used Ioniq 5 N can be had for the price of either of our contenders. The quick Korean hatch is very nearly as practical yet sets new standards for EV driver engagement and fun.



Aligning the stars

As a smaller car maker, Subaru can't afford any missteps in this era of electrification. **JAMES ATTWOOD** hears how the brand will change – and grow – while staying true to its heritage



W

ord association time: what comes to mind when you think of Subaru? Easy: a blue and yellow Impreza flying sideways down a rally stage, somewhere around – or possibly just beyond – the limit.

Here's something that doesn't come to mind, though: electric vehicles.

With the heavy cost of electrification and an influx of cut-price Chinese manufacturers, these are difficult times for even the largest car makers operating in Europe. And for the smaller ones struggling for every sale they can get, it's enough to make you wonder: why go to the trouble?

Subaru Europe boss David Dello Stritto understands why you might ask that. "You could think: 'Okay, we're selling around 30,000 cars a year in Europe and we're doing around 700,000 in the US, so why bother?'" says the Scot. "That would be a fair question."

Yes, Subaru is far more successful in markets where its utilitarian 4x4s are more in vogue and electrification is less of a hot topic – and its one-time great rallying rival, Mitsubishi, drastically scaled back its efforts in Europe years ago. But with all the commitment of Colin McRae on the ragged edge, Dello Stritto says: "I'll tell you what, Subaru Corporation has said repeatedly they have no intention of leaving Europe. They want to stay in Europe."

He notes that Subaru couldn't shift its European sales to the saturated American market – which already accounts for around 75% of the brand's volume – and it's struggling in China against domestic firms. But, most importantly, there's pride at Subaru about being a global company.

So Subaru wants and needs to be present in Europe – but that creates a challenge. While large manufacturers can now hedge their bets and spread their resources between developing electric and combustion lines, smaller ones such as Subaru can't. It's partly why its early EV efforts, the Solterra and forthcoming Trailseeker, have been co-developed with Toyota.

"We have no choice," says Dello Stritto. "We have to migrate from what we have today to a full battery-electric vehicle line-up in Europe as soon as possible. This is the vision."

Subaru's goal is to boost global sales from 976,000 last year to around 1.2 million by 2030, with around half of those cars being electric. Yes, fully electric: the firm has developed a full-hybrid powertrain (badged e-Boxer), but it isn't looking at plug-in hybrid or range-extender EV technology. It can't afford to.

Europe will be important to hitting those EV targets, but uneven growth in EV sales and recent changes to both UK and EU legislation have caused tremendous uncertainty.

Asked how he expects the European EV market to develop in the next year or so, Dello Stritto says: "That's a tough one, and I haven't got a crystal ball. But in the case of Subaru, we haven't got that many options. We haven't got the options that, say, Toyota and Hyundai have got. We've got one mild-hybrid powertrain at the moment. Subaru is transitioning directly to EV, and the next step is to gradually increase the proportion of full EV we sell in each country."

Dello Stritto is well aware that doing this will require changing some people's mindsets. "We need to roll up our sleeves and find a way to transition [to EVs]," he says. "I have to convince long-standing loyal Subaru buyers that it's okay

not to have a boxer engine any more, and WRX fans are saying 'thanks but no thanks'. I'm not taking no for an answer. It will take time, but we're seeing mentalities change a bit."

It's worth reflecting on the technologies and vehicles that have long underpinned Subaru's line-up: longitudinally mounted engines of four horizontally opposed cylinders and permanent all-wheel drive. They led to a line of specific cars that served a specific purpose, helping secure Subaru a small but loyal following.

Of course, in the early 1990s, longitudinally mounted engines and all-wheel drive also proved ideal for top-tier rallying. The road-going Impreza WRX and its successors transformed the image of the brand. For a period of time, just about the coolest performance car you could buy was a rally-honed Japanese saloon.

The trouble is that unless you're really on the hunt for a cost-effective, solid, dependable go-anywhere, all-wheel-drive estate, you probably haven't thought much about Subaru since those heady days of McRae, Burns and Solberg.

The WRX STI, the successor to those high-performance Impreza road cars, has long since vanished from UK showrooms, and the current line-up – the Crosstrek crossover, Outback estate, Forester SUV and Solterra electric SUV – is big on no-nonsense ruggedness but short on performance heritage and brand prestige.

It's a range that has netted steady rather than spectacular results in UK showrooms but enough for Subaru to sustain itself with a niche audience. The brand sold 2419 cars in the UK last year – with the Solterra accounting for around a fifth of those – and hit the milestone of 250,000 cars sold since it first came to this country in 1976.

Buyers are loyal: many are on their fifth or sixth example and studies suggest Subaru buyers hold onto their cars far longer than average.

Still, those figures contrast to the US, where 667,725 sales made ▶

Subaru had three of the 25 best-selling cars in the US last year: the Crosstrek led the way, closely followed by the Forester and Outback.



New Forester SUV follows the classic Subaru format...



...as do the Outback estate and Crosstrek crossover...



...but all will need to go fully electric in Europe by 2035



LOYAL BUYERS GIVE SOLID BASE FOR UK GROWTH

Subaru UK has a clear vision of its current core brand values: safe, fun and tough. As boss Lorraine Bishton says, its cars are “an extension of the family”, with a focus on being “capable but very comfortable” and also value for money.

Those traits breed brand loyalty: for instance, Subaru UK recently highlighted the example of Bill Nunn (pictured above), who has just bought his 26th Subaru (a sixth-gen Forester) in 30 years, all from the same dealership.

For buyers such as him, then, it's essential that future models retain those strengths.

As well as the updated Solterra, two new Subaru EVs will be launched in the UK in the next 12 months: the Trailseeker (which might be renamed) and another, possibly smaller, car.

The success of the Solterra has put Subaru UK ahead of ZEV mandate requirements, although the firm's relatively low sales of just under 2500 cars in 2024 qualify it for exemptions for smaller-scale manufacturers.

Not that Subaru UK wants to settle for that: the goal is to grow annual sales to around 12,000, broadly in line with its rally-fuelled mid-1990s peak. That's where the renewed focus on performance will help.

Growing sales in the current market will be a challenge: Subaru UK not only has to battle regulation uncertainty and new technology but also a wave of new entrants into the market (including GWM and Xpeng, whose UK imports are handled by Subaru UK parent firm International Motors).

But, as Bishton notes, people already know what Subaru is: “They speak fondly of Subaru”, even if they “don't know what it stands for”. And the firm has a solid, loyal network of dealers – who in turn have a network of loyal customers like Nunn.

So while Subaru UK may be starting from a small base, it's also a very solid one, giving good potential for steady growth.

“I have to convince loyal Subaru buyers that it's okay to go electric. I'm not taking no for an answer”



Subaru is synonymous with rallying, but the Impreza WRX lineage ended in the UK in 2018



Trailseeker is essentially an electric equivalent of the stalwart Outback



◀ Subaru the eighth-biggest marque last year, ahead of Volkswagen.

While Subaru of America has invested in motorsport, it's far less integral to the popular image of the brand as it is here – as the possibly apocryphal tale that many Americans thought Colin McRae was only a video game character suggests. But Dello Stritto doesn't think the brand's US success is purely a legacy issue.

"Subaru hasn't always been successful in the US," he says. "They were struggling because their models were too expensive and they couldn't control their dealer network, who were discounting cars because they couldn't sell them. That doesn't help the brand. They changed all that, adjusted their pricing and marketing strategy with a real outdoors focus. But it wasn't just marketing: they were very good at identifying clusters of customers who wanted a car that looked a bit different and did what they needed."

That's partly why Subaru is particularly strong in rural states, where its all-wheel-drive tech is useful, and with more liberally minded people.

"They targeted very specific groups, but we don't have those groups in Europe," says Dello Stritto. "We had the petrolheads. The success of Subaru in the US is about volume, which we don't have in Europe. But it depends on the

country: in Switzerland, you will find lots of Subarus in the mountains. But in the UK, it's a struggle for awareness.

"There are people who know Subaru but associate it as a sporty brand, and the models we can give them aren't as sporty as they used to be. But what we do have – and we're so lucky – is a very loyal group of customers who will keep on buying our cars for their safety and capability."

In theory, electrification and the wholesale technology change – farewell, boxer engine – offers an opportunity for Subaru to reset its values. But instead the plan is to use EV technology to double down on them.

The brand's first EV, the Solterra, was essentially a rebadged bZ4X built by Toyota as part of a wider partnership. But, notably, Subaru offers its version only with a dual-motor, all-wheel-drive powertrain. The newly launched Trailseeker sits on the same Toyota-developed platform but features more Subaru parts and technology and will be built by Subaru itself. Unlike the Solterra, it features identically sized electric motors on each axle – an arrangement developed by Subaru to offer better all-wheel-drive capability.

Subaru has several more EVs in the works too, some developed in partnership with Toyota and some developed entirely in-house.

Subaru UK has 57 dealers, mostly in rural areas; 2419 cars were sold last year



Bosses say Subaru will not abandon its sporting heritage in UK and Europe



1980s GLF is early example of Subaru's UK focus on rugged and capable cars



While the US remains the early focus, Dello Stritto says that Europe's wants are being taken into account in future planning.

Intriguingly, electrification also offers Subaru a way to reconnect with its performance heritage. The brand currently sponsors the World Superbike Championship, with a Solterra being used as the course car. Dello Stritto admits that many bike racing fans "hate electric" but claims they're being won over slowly. And he is also adamant that Subaru will embrace performance again in the future, potentially with a return of the STI badge for sporty versions of its current models.

"With an EV, you've got the power and performance and you've got an all-wheel drive system," says Dello Stritto. "We're working on more sporty models, and electrification allows us to do this. Let's face it: it's nice to have that prospect of a future WRX STI – super-fast, gold wheels, blue colour. This is what we want, at the end of the day."

Electrification is challenging the whole automotive industry, but for smaller car makers that don't have the luxury of hedging their bets, it's particularly acute. To thrive in the future, Subaru will have to reinvent everything it's known for while still embracing the core values it has long stood for. **A**

All the parts for the restoration were sourced from eBay sellers



Van extraordinaire

A Mk1 Transit by design legend Peter Stevens? JOHN EVANS had to see it

Car designer Peter Stevens, famed for the McLaren F1, is revealing the inspiration behind one of his latest projects: "I was working away from home in Coventry and staying in a very basic hotel. There wasn't even a chair in my room. So, one evening, I'm sitting on my bed eating a takeaway and feeling quite depressed when I thought: I know, I'll buy a camper van with all mod cons, park it in the car park of the firm I'm working at and sleep in that instead!"

We've all got to kip somewhere, of course, but Stevens – the designer of all-time classics including the F1, Jaguar XJR-15, Lotus Elan 'M100', Lotus 'X180' Esprit and the 1999 Le Mans-winning BMW V12 LMR – putting his head down in a client's car park? "There are some people who like being designers and some who like designing," he explains. "I'm the latter. I certainly don't expect special treatment. In any case, living in the motorhome gave me ideas for the project I was working on."

That project was designing the interior



1975 Transit used to be a German fire service vehicle



Stevens had a blank canvas; note its conversion to RHD

of a Mk1 Ford Transit, an event vehicle commissioned by eBay to promote the availability of new and used car parts on its website and which it has dubbed the eBay Lounge. The former German fire service Transit was registered in 1975 and restored and converted last year by the Envisage Group, based in Coventry. It had worked with Stevens in the past and thought the legendary designer the obvious choice to remodel the van's interior.

This year marks the Ford Transit's 60th anniversary, and while eBay might have been tempted to commission an attention-grabbing tribute, instead it has respected the donor vehicle's original design and specification. The eBay Lounge is still powered by its original 1.7-litre V4 petrol engine, for example, albeit modified to burn E5 fuel, and has the four-speed gearbox it left the factory with. The only major change, apart from Stevens' redesigned event space, has been its conversion from left- to right-hand drive and the addition of a pop-up roof.

"During the early discussions, we agreed it would have no silly 21in wheels or be lowered,"



"Having done the McLaren F1, I was momentarily unemployable"

GUIDE TO eBay PARTS

Assured Fit

Parts marked with the Assured Fit guarantee allow free returns for items that don't fit.

My Garage

My Garage simplifies searches using the vehicle's registration number to identify the correct parts.

Certified Recycled

Parts with this eBay tag are up to 70% cheaper than OEM and are warranted and sourced from approved end-of-life vehicles.



Stevens does the international sign for "Speed up, John!"



Makeover intentionally respects the original, including its roll angle

says Stevens. "Instead, we said it must respect the original design and specification and not spoil it with a sad caravan interior."

On that point, Stevens was able to draw on the experience of his motorhome. "That vehicle showed me what I don't like in a caravan interior," he says. So in place of pastel shades and floral fabrics, Stevens has chosen dark wood for the cabinets, a brushed steel sink with a smoked glass cover, a cool-looking counter-top fridge and a tough, uncarpeted floor, all from eBay sellers.

Also from eBay are a Bentley alloy wheel table, passenger and driver seats that can turn 180deg and a pair of 'old timer' retro sports seats for use outside. Stevens' favourite item is the Classic JLR retro radio sourced from the Jaguar Classic Parts store on eBay. Envisage also went shopping for parts on the website, sourcing everything from Mk1 Transit headlights to drivetrain and suspension components from the official eBay Ford store. Fuel pipes, brake lines and electrical and other parts also came from eBay.

In his spare time, Stevens, 82, still races and enjoys driving his collection of cars, which includes a 2CV van, a Ford Model A roadster pick-up and a 1932 3.2-litre 'Alexander Special' hot rod. He rides shotgun with me as I take the Transit for a few circuits of the track at Bicester Heritage. I'm impressed by his composure as I wrestle with the old commercial's woolly steering and wand-like gear selector. After a few laps, I'm getting the hang of it but the mushy brakes can still generate a few surprises. Either there's nothing in the cabinets or whatever is there is stowed securely, but there are few rattles from the back. It's a pukka job and Stevens is pleased to have his name attached to it: "Whether it's a supercar or a camper van, I just love designing!" **A**

Stevens on his design career



"Having done the McLaren F1, I was momentarily unemployable because everybody assumed I'd charge McLaren prices!"

"My proudest achievement was the Jaguar XJR-15. We did it in a very short time and on a very small budget. Tom Walkinshaw [boss of TWR, the firm behind the XJR-15] stuck the registration plates from his Range Rover on it and drove it for a week before declaring he loved it.

"The Jaguar avoided what I call the 'folded cardboard style' of Italian design, which Lotus

was then obsessed with. I did the aero changes to the Esprit



because the first, square-edged version was disastrous in terms of aerodynamics. Marketing advertised that it had a drag coefficient of 0.33 but in truth it was 0.45. My version actually was 0.33 Cd, which they then complained was the same, so I said they should emphasise its stability. When [Giorgetto] Giugiaro saw it at Geneva, he gave me a hug and said: 'Fantastic!'

"Rover once asked me and the team: if we owned an MG-Rover, what would it look like? We came up with a Rover 25 with four bucket seats and a tough, off-roady look. The Streetwise, as it became known [below], was a huge success and I still see them being driven in the lanes near me because they're so well protected.

"Modern design is in a muddle. There's a desperation to sell the new, especially now that people have their car on a short lease and then hand it back. It's why you see these funny colours because people don't have to bear the depreciation. I like Polestar's clean and simple designs but a lot of other new cars look like they'll eat your dog!"



JOSEPH HARDING, MALCOLM GRIFFITHS, MATT HOWELL



Stevens' time living in a motorhome informed his design for the interior

LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"My favourite aspect of the driving experience was actually the braking"



FINAL REPORT

MILEAGE 2398

CUPRA TAVASCAN

Is it an athletic family car or just a pretend one in a tracksuit? Verdict's in

WHY WE RAN IT To find out if the Cupra Tavascan really is a sporty SUV – and if the segment needs it

When I was handed the keys to Cupra's funky-looking new electric SUV at the start of the year, I was excited, especially given how much I had loved the smaller Born electric hatchback.

While that car was essentially a reworked and sportier version of a Volkswagen ID 3, the Tavascan was billed as Cupra's take on the ID 5. I was intrigued to learn more.

So, in my first report, I asked whether this 2.3-tonne EV, with 335bhp and a 0-62mph time of 5.5sec, really could be considered a sporty proposition or was just another dynamically challenged family hauler in go-faster clothes. Well, reader, the results are in. And the answer is... at best mixed.

Let's start with the positives. I never grew tired of the car's design.

While it is based on the same MEB platform as its Volkswagen Group cousins, the Tavascan seems to break (or at least crack) the mould in a world where it's becoming more difficult to differentiate between EVs (thank you, aerodynamics and platform and powertrain sharing). And while you can see the similarities to its family members, the sporty, angular front end kept me far more interested throughout our time together than an ID 5 did over a weekend. It genuinely did give the car its own identity.

But it was the interior that really stood out. Compared with the minimalist, utilitarian approach of Volkswagen and Skoda, Cupra opted to inject more flair. The floating central 'spine' was the centrepiece: while playing a role in dividing the cabin, it also gave

the interior a much more premium feel – helped by plentiful ambient lighting. It was just such a lovely and welcoming place to be, and made my long, dark winter commutes home much more eventful.

Contributing to that, this time for the wrong reasons, were the steering wheel's touch-sensitive buttons. Like in the Tavascan's Volkswagen relations, the buttons can easily be activated by accident, each time adding to the frustration. Because I couldn't feel them, either, I found myself needing to take my eyes off the road more than I would have liked to locate the right one.

Back to the positives. On the practical side, the Tavascan was a good companion. With 540 litres of boot space, decent rear leg room and storage compartments galore, it made weekend trips away with my

SECOND OPINION



Funny car, this. Cupra tried to make it drive as sporty as it looks but was hamstrung by the limitations of the VW Group's MEB platform and simply being too big and too heavy to offer any deftness to its handling. Still, in a sea of similarly sized and priced rivals, it does stand out for its design. You can't say that of any other MEB EV. **MT**



'Spine' gave the interior a unique look



Tavascan wasn't as fun to drive as the styling suggested



It proved nicely sprung, though, and the seats were comfortable too



Families will have no complaints about the boot capacity

mates a breeze – even when it was packed full of golf and hockey kit.

So it's a practical and comfortable family hauler, then. But back to my original question: was it sporty?

No, not even a little bit. While the Tavascan handles well for an SUV closing in on 2.3 tonnes and offers good levels of ride comfort, it isn't something to chuck around a series of snaking B-roads on a Sunday morning. The car just isn't set up to be a point-and-go machine like the Born: the steering isn't direct, the weight isn't particularly well balanced and the chassis doesn't allow any form of playfulness.

Power delivery isn't a strong suit either. Activating the Cupra drive mode (via a big copper button on the wheel) primes the full 335bhp. Sounds great – until you touch the accelerator pedal, when the speed at which all that power is deployed is complete overkill for a car like this.

What's more, efficiency accordingly drops to 1.5mpkWh, amounting to a range of around 115 miles. As such, I kept the Tavascan in Normal mode 99% of the time.

Thus set, the car's efficiency and

range were fine, if rather less than promised. It achieved an average of 2.9mpkWh – mostly on motorways – for a real-world range of 223 miles. Thankfully, the battery could be rapid-charged at up to 135kW, so my frequent service station top-ups – note the relatively high 'cost per mile' (right) – weren't drawn out.

My favourite aspect of the driving experience was actually the regenerative braking. The paddles for adjusting its strength were an excellent touch that I used as much as the pedal itself. In the strongest setting, the regen will even bring you to a halt, masking the brakes' snappy nature and inconsistent transition between motor and friction braking.

Also noteworthy were a few instances when the advanced driver aids left me feeling a bit shaken. The sensors misinterpreted ramps and kerbs in a multi-storey car park as hazards and thus activated the emergency braking system. On one occasion, it activated mid-descent with the wheels already half turned, so the car started to slide down the ramp – which was alarming. Cupra

TEST DATA

CUPRA TAVASCAN 77KWH AFV 340 VZ1

MILEAGE

At start 105
At end 2398

PRICES

List price new £55,935
List price now £57,215
Price as tested £58,265

OPTIONS

Metallic paint £995, winter pack £1335

ECONOMY AND RANGE

Claimed range 320 miles
Battery 82/77kWh (total/usable)
Test average 2.9mpkWh
Test best 3.6mpkWh
Test worst 1.5mpkWh
Real-world range 223 miles

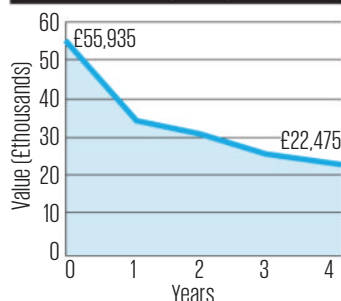
TECH HIGHLIGHTS

0-62mph 5.5sec
Top speed 112mph
Engine Asynchronous motor (f), permanent magnet synchronous motor (r)
Max power 335bhp
Max torque 402lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, RWD
Boot 540 litres
Wheels 9.0Jx21in, alloy
Tyres 235/55 R21, Continental EcoContact 6
Kerb weight 2267kg

SERVICE AND RUNNING COSTS

Contract hire rate £408 pcm
CO₂ 0g/km
Service costs None
Other costs None
Fuel costs £511.94
Running costs including fuel £511.94
Cost per mile 22 pence
Faults None

DEPRECIATION



PREVIOUS REPORTS

5 Mar, 12 Mar, 19 Mar, 2 Apr, 9 Apr, 23 Apr, 7 May

said they would look into the issue.

So, if it's not a genuinely sporty family EV, what exactly is the Tavascan? Really, it's a sensible family car with some fire in its belly – and, when regarded as such, it's a pretty good one: it is comfortable, spacious, full of kit and with enough about it to keep it interesting as an everyday companion. It feels like it was designed by people who care about aesthetics, tactility and fun, even if that doesn't really translate to how it drives.

But for those who are uninspired by conservatively designed modern EVs, it offers something a little more interesting.

WILL RIMELL

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

will.rimell@haymarket.com

LOVE IT



BOOT SPACE

The Tavascan has a large, 540-litre boot with handy extras like bag hooks and an underfloor space for the charging cables.



INFOTAINMENT INTERFACE

The touchscreen is big, clear and (mostly) responsive, with clever quick-access tabs. One of the better I've experienced.



REGENERATIVE BRAKING PADDLES

An unusual and actually useful feature that helps smooth out awkward brake tuning.

LOATHE IT



TOUCH CONTROLS

Both overly sensitive and under-responsive so annoying in everyday use. Bring back buttons – especially for the rear windows!



ILLUMINATED BADGE

Awful thing. Personal taste here, but it looks a bit aftermarket, rather than a premium feature.

VOLVO EX40

So is the lowest-profile Volvo EV the one you should take most notice of?

WHY WE RAN IT To see if this veteran might actually be the pick of Volvo's growing, tech-first EV range

Such is the reassuring familiarity of a Volvo SUV that when this EX40 arrived on our fleet several months ago, I knew exactly what to expect: a dependable, refined, spacious tourer with a premium feel and a dash of Scandi-cool. It wouldn't be tremendously exciting, but it would fit a brief that has kept plenty of buyers happy. And, as the EX40 departs, I'm pleased to say it delivered on those expectations – mostly.

To start with, the EX40 is one of the most accessible electric cars I've driven. A newcomer to EVs wouldn't be intimidated to drive it, and it was expertly undemanding on the road. What it lacked in dynamism it made up for by making every journey straightforward and stress-free. Not a given in today's tech-led cars.

That accessibility could be because the EX40 is so familiar, being based on the highly successful petrol-powered XC40. We have run a number of examples on our fleet over the years, ranging from pure-ICE and plug-in hybrid XC40s to a dual-motor XC40 Recharge EV.

This EX40 Plus Single Motor Extended Range is perhaps the ideal spec for an EV, since its combination of a single rear-mounted motor and the biggest battery in the line-up gives the longest range possible.

The 252bhp offered is well down on the range-topping Twin Motor

Performance model's 436bhp but I found it to be comfortably enough for all day-to-day driving situations.

The feeling was reinforced when I got the chance to try a 402bhp dual-motor EC40. That model (essentially identical to the EX40 aside from the sloping coupé roofline) was sharper in the corners and clearly faster, but all its extra power felt unnecessary in a family SUV on UK roads.

My EX40 also felt more settled on country lanes, perhaps because it was rear-driven and a little lighter.

I also welcomed the extra interior and boot space enabled by the EX40's higher roofline, not least because I kept bashing my head on the EC40's bootlid whenever I



The comfort was welcome on a long trip to Cornwall. The economy less so



Ease of operation will appeal to those who are thinking of going electric

Single-motor EX40 is not short of oomph, but look elsewhere for B-road fun



Digital interface is positively restrained compared with newer Volvo EVs



Good news: our car promised 353 miles. Bad news: we got less than 200



"It made every journey straightforward and stress-free"

opened it. But that might just be me.

The EX40's 452-litre boot served me well during our time together and helped me move house more than once, but it's a fair bit down on the Audi Q4 E-tron (520 litres) and put to shame by the admittedly bigger Skoda Enyaq (585 litres).

I couldn't have asked for much more from behind the wheel, though. The EX40's interior is practical and extremely relaxing. The suede textiles and Microtech upholstery and highly adjustable cushioned seats helped make all my journeys pass by in total comfort.

Comfortable inside and pleasantly undemanding to drive, then. What's not to like? Well, there was one glaring issue I encountered whenever I drove the EX40: efficiency.

Our car was fitted with the bigger, 82kWh battery, compared with entry-level models that come with a 66kWh pack. When it was delivered, our car had an official WLTP range of 340 miles, which is competitive for this class. Better still, a software update during its time on the fleet boosted this to 353 miles.

Sadly, I never saw anything close to that. And while most EVs fail to match their official rating in the real world, this EX40 simply isn't competitive with newer, more efficient rivals, some of which

can easily exceed 4mpkWh.

In 8000 miles of driving, I never saw more than 260 miles of range on my digital driver display. My average economy amounted to around 198 miles on a full battery. Even a peak of 268 miles was well down on the claimed range, pre- or post-software update. Winter driving was of course a factor, but things didn't improve markedly once the weather warmed up.

Still, the charging speed was decent at 185kW, so I was able to get it topped back up fairly quickly.

While parked up at the chargers I was able to fully explore Volvo's infotainment system, which in my experience is among the easiest to use and one I will really miss. It has a Google-powered user interface, so I was able to log into my account and access all my saved locations and Google Maps search history.

The various downloadable apps even made those charging stops rather enjoyable: I watched videos on YouTube to keep me entertained, logged in directly to Spotify to access my music library and used the fireplace app to warm me up. It nearly made me forget I had the heating turned off in January to conserve range.

It was also a reminder that Volvo cars are increasingly becoming software-based, and that this EX40

TEST DATA

VOLVO EX40 PLUS SINGLE MOTOR EXTENDED RANGE

MILEAGE

At start 749

At end 8933

PRICES

List price new £54,305

List price now £54,160

Price as tested £54,305

OPTIONS

None

ECONOMY AND RANGE

Claimed range 353 miles

Battery 82/79kWh (total/usable)

Test average 2.5mpkWh

Test best 3.4mpkWh

Test worst 2.2mpkWh

Real-world range 198 miles

Max charge rate 185kW

TECH HIGHLIGHTS

0-62mph 7.2sec

Top speed 112mph

Engine Permanent magnet

synchronous motor

Max power 252bhp

Max torque 310lb ft

Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, RWD

Boot 452 litres

Wheels 19in, alloy

Tyres 235/50 R19 (F), 255/45 R19 (R)

Kerb weight 2001kg

SERVICE AND RUNNING COSTS

Contract hire rate £733 pcm

CO₂ 0g/km

Service costs None

Other costs None

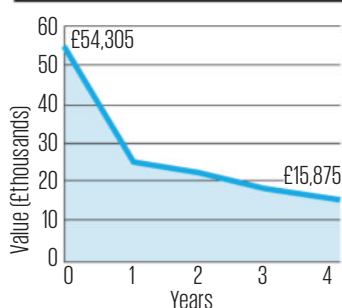
Fuel costs £652

Running costs including fuel £652

Cost per mile 8 pence

Faults None

DEPRECIATION



PREVIOUS REPORTS

29 Jan, 5 Feb, 12 Feb, 26 Feb, 5 Mar, 19 Mar, 2 Apr, 16 Apr, 7 May, 14 May

is a bit of an outlier in a line-up now also including the smaller EX30 and the larger EX90. Would you be better off jumping into a newer EX30, with its stripped-back, modern design and heavy touchscreen focus? One of those is due on our fleet soon, so we'll find out then – and more definitively be able to identify the sweet spot in Volvo's EV range.

If you're already tempted by the EX40 and its range meets your driving needs, though, don't let its age put you off. This is a compelling proposition, mixing intuitive and user-friendly technology with a bit of old-school Volvo charm.

JACK WARRICK

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

jack.warrick@haymarket.com

LOVE IT



INTERIOR AMBIENCE

Comfy seats and accessible tech put this SUV near the top of the class. Driver assistance systems are quite relaxed too.



ALL-ROUND PRACTICALITY

Boot space was up to the task of two house moves, while the airy, practical cabin had plenty of front and rear leg room.



PUNCHY POWERTRAIN

Even in single-motor guise, the EX40 is nice and powerful and makes light work of most day-to-day driving situations.

LOATHE IT



NOT VERY EFFICIENT

I could never get near the advertised range figure, even when hypermiling. So much for the bigger battery.



HUMDRUM HANDLING

Owing to its two-tonne weight and SUV dimensions, this is not one to chuck into corners. But then it's just not that kind of car.



SECOND OPINION



The EX40 is a curious thing. It occupies a similar space to the EX30 yet is quite different. It is older, and feels it, but is no worse for it. In the general scheme of things the EX40 is still extremely modern, yet it retains the buttons and switches that the EX30 has jettisoned. I think it broadly feels much more like a Volvo product than the EX30. Jack's long-term economy is tragic, though. **MSC**

MINI ACEMAN

New electric-only baby crossover joins the fleet in its cheapest form

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To find out how easy it is to live with a small-battery EV in 2025

The eagle-eyed among you might recognise YE74 NKC. It graced these pages a few weeks ago, when I delivered a two-and-a-half-star verdict on it. It's important at this point to note that it underachieved in this specific form: the small-battery one. The big-battery model tested earlier this year achieved three and a half stars. I'm hoping that living with this car might prompt a thorough reappraisal and prove the smaller battery isn't so much of an impediment to daily life.

Let's make some introductions. The Aceman is Mini's new electric-only baby crossover – a rival to the Volvo EX30 and Ford Puma Gen-E and ostensibly a tall and chunky Cooper hatchback. The E version has a diddy usable battery capacity of 38.5kWh, which the WLTP lab

boffins reckon is good for 190 miles of range.

When I saw the spec sheet, I didn't think much of the silver body and grey wheels combination, but it really works in the metal. The paint's hues range from blue to grey depending on how the light

catches it and the alloys are a dark, slightly metallic grey.

Mini pitches this Chinese-made crossover as a halfway house between the Cooper and the Countryman SUV. A deft move, really, as the former is one of the smallest cars on the market today,

while the latter has grown to the size of a Nissan Qashqai.

Step inside and things are good. The circular infotainment touchscreen may be massive, but what really struck me first is the seating position. It's upright and the driver gets an armrest, a bit



It looks identical to a Cooper inside but feels like a crossover



"The range looks a bit 2020, but maybe Mini doesn't need to move the game on in terms of hardware"

like the captain's chair you would find in a Range Rover. To me, it's perfect for this little SUV aimed at city folk who want 4x4-aping looks and a domineering view out while keeping things small enough to not make parking a nightmare.

I haven't managed to create a 'profile' on the infotainment system yet. The first few times I drove the car, I was in a bit of a rush and didn't have time. But before embarking on a longer trip recently, I sat down and came up short, apparently due to 'no server connection'. I probably wasted about 20 minutes. I will try again and let you know if I succeed.

Not having a profile may not sound all that problematic, but I

assure you it is, for two reasons.

First, unless you make a profile, the system doesn't remember any of your settings, including your phone. So every time I've driven the car, I've had to pair my phone via Bluetooth. I prefer to use Apple CarPlay to any car's in-built software, simply because Apple spends more money developing software than car makers do whole cars. When I use it here, though, it appears on the circular screen in a small square box, which looks crap and is just not as big as I'd like. Bit of a fail there. Oh and get this: the Mini doesn't have wired Apple CarPlay, so yes, I do need to reconnect my sodding phone via

Bluetooth each and every time.

Second, I'm in my thirties and manage a website for a living, so if I can't get the thing set up, how are people like my mum supposed to do it?

One more gripe. My local public chargers provide 22kW of AC, but the Aceman E is limited to 11kW of AC, making the whole process take longer – which is a shame, because one of the benefits of having a relatively small battery should be that it's quick to charge. It can handle 70kW of DC, but you only really find those faster chargers at service stations.

Pros? In a world where new cars are very expensive, £31,445 for a fashionable electric Mini crossover feels reasonable (especially compared with the £34,350 price it turns out Mini erroneously quoted us when we first tested it). It basically has the same interior as all the other Minis, which is pared back but feels really well put together and has a nice blend of materials.

Mini loves an options pack, and my car is fitted with one (Level 1 goodies listed below). So far, I'd say that the head-up display seems essential; the infotainment screen is large and clear, but it makes sense having your MPH in line with the steering wheel. I'll report later on just how much I use the stuff in it.

I'll also write in detail about the Aceman's dynamics, because it has some quirks, but in short it feels very Mini, in that it's pokey and tightly sprung.

The reason we have this Aceman here is because of the conundrum of its core numbers. Its 190-mile range from a 38.5kWh battery may look a bit 2020, but I'm wondering if maybe Mini doesn't need to move the game on in terms of hardware. Maybe it just needs to do the 'cool-looking and reasonably priced' thing? And maybe, just maybe, Mini is banking on things changing.

Having an EV with 150-ish miles of real-world range might have been a pain a few years ago, but is it possible that Britain's charging infrastructure has improved to the point where buying a car with small, economical and cheap batteries is viable in 2025? After all, EVs with small batteries weigh less and should do more miles per kWh than their larger-battery cousins. Let's find out.

MURRAY SCULLION

TEST DATA

MINI ACEMAN E CLASSIC

Price new £28,905 Price as tested £31,445 Options Level 1 pack (adaptive LED headlights, keyless entry, auto-dimming wing mirrors, auto-dimming rear-view mirror, heated front seat, high-beam assistance, head-up display, wireless phone charging) £2000, 18in Night Flash grey alloy wheels £550 Faults None Expenses None Range 190 miles (WLTP) Economy 4.4mpkWh (WLTP)

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

murray.scullion@haymarket.com

SNAPSHOTS



CUPRA LEON ESTATE

Mileage 6010 Last seen 14.5.25

A weekend away with a few car-averse friends gave me valuable insights into how well Cupra is resonating with its young and trendy target market. "I thought Seat made the Leon," said one when I arrived. "Is it a Tesla?" wondered another innocently on clocking the unfamiliar emblem. I had high hopes for a part-time petrolhead, until he asked: "Cupra's the all-electric brand, isn't it? What's the range like?" I've got some teaching to do. **FP**



SUZUKI SWIFT

Mileage 9876 Last seen 7.5.25

The Swift's touchscreen is pretty small (not that I would want it to be any bigger) but still quite annoying at night. So imagine my delight when I found out that you can turn it off while keeping your music going. Paired with the analogue dials, it turns night driving into a retro experience in all the right ways. **JH**



TESLA MODEL 3

Mileage 41,321 Last seen 14.5.25

A week after getting new tyres, our used Tesla suffered its first electrical glitch, as a warning flashed up for a problem with the tyre pressure monitoring system. Presumably the wheel sensor was disturbed during the fitting, and although the warning suggested 'fault may clear next drive', it didn't. So I popped into the huge (but quiet) Tesla Centre Guildford and it was quickly sorted while I availed myself of coffee and wi-fi. **AC**



Don't be fooled by the chunky look: this is a supermini-size car



SECOND OPINION



I feel Murray's pain about the vital importance of setting up a Mini ID user account. And it's not just about pairing your phone: the position settings of the head-up display and your particular 'toolbelt' of quick-access controls are also linked to it. Once you've done it, the car is a lot more agreeable to just hop into and drive. **MS**

USED CARS

HOW TO BUY A
SKODA YETI



FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Many in the know want to capture a Yeti – and for very good reason

Jacked-up hatchback or compact SUV? Whichever way you view the Skoda Yeti, there's no denying that the Czech marque's segment-blending family car is unique, even if it did borrow its engines and parts from the vast stores of the Volkswagen Group.

Its funky silhouette and quirky dimensions captured Europeans' imaginations when it first arrived in 2009: more than 700,000 were sold before production came to an end in 2018. And long after its demise, this cheerful chariot still holds up as a reliable and appealing family wagon – especially as it can now be bought for as little as £1500. That's a bargain price for a crossover that's more refined than a contemporary Dacia Duster and more pleasing to drive than a Nissan Qashqai.

The Yeti's Volkswagen Golf underpinnings ensured that it drove more like a hatchback on the road despite its SUV looks, with surprising agility, grip and balance. The steering is accurate, the body is kept well in check and there's a pleasing sense of togetherness and predictability to how the Yeti handles, be it in town, on a rural back road or down a motorway.

It can be caught out by the odd short sharp intrusion, but the ride is generally comfortable, so you and your passengers – and even the St Bernard lounging in the 416-litre boot – won't feel aggrieved.

There's plenty of flexibility to the cabin too: you can slide the rear seats fore and aft to increase boot capacity, fold them almost flat, or remove them completely to create essentially a small van. Head and



Small touchscreen is flanked by handy physical controls

How to get one in your garage

AN OWNER'S VIEW UNA MULLIGAN-QUENBY

"I've had a Skoda Yeti for three years. My old car was involved in an accident, so I upgraded to one with a leather interior and air conditioning. I love the Yeti: it reminds me of my old Land Rover Freelander, and because it's tall and has a great driving position, I can see over hedgerows on country lanes. It's good in town and fits into tight parking spaces. I would highly recommend one, and it's a shame that Skoda doesn't still make them."



like shutting off the air-con and flagging an incorrect warning on the instrument cluster.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

The Yeti was offered in a number of special-edition forms, including the Monte Carlo, which got sports seats and a black finish for the wheels, roof and mirror caps; the Tour de France, which came with a bike rack; the Adventure, which was laden with extra standard equipment; and the Outdoor, which had more rugged styling.

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£1500-£5999

A broad mix of engines and trims but lots of older examples, some of which have covered well over 100,000 miles. Plenty with a full history, some one-owner cars.

£6000-£9999

Lots of trims in this price range and more facelifted cars to choose from. More petrols, too.

£10,000-£13,999

Mainly dealer-sold cars with reasonable mileages and in good condition. Immaculate, one-owner, full-history cars in a high trim level are easy to spot here.

£14,000 AND ABOVE

Yetis from 2016 and 2017 with fewer than 50,000 miles. Dealer sales only. Pristine condition.



ONE WE FOUND

SKODA YETI OUTDOOR 2.0 TDI ELEGANCE 4x4, 2015, 73,000 MILES, £8990

This is an ideal family hauler. It was serviced only a few months ago and comes with a healthy MOT. Being a range-topper, it has useful equipment like Bluetooth, cruise control and heated seats. And it's more than up to the task of towing, being fitted with the punchy 168bhp diesel engine.

knee room are generous enough for adults in the rear, too, and there are endless storage cubbies for your offspring to hide sweet wrappers.

Materially the Yeti has a robust and durable feel inside, while the dashboard is logically configured and the switchgear is easy to use.

Four trims were available from launch – E, S, SE and Elegance. All versions are well equipped, but we would aim for at least an SE for its dual-zone climate control and rear parking sensors, or an Elegance for its bi-xenon headlights, leather trim and heated front seats.

SE L and posh Laurin & Klement trims were added in 2013, then in 2014 the Yeti was treated to a facelift, which improved its looks with a sharper front end, improved its interior and introduced more kit.

You can pay around £6000 for a nicely maintained, 75,000-mile pre-facelift Yeti, but it's well worth forking out the extra £1000-£2000 for a post-facelift car.

There's a broad range of engines to choose from, each available with either a six-speed manual or a dual-clutch (DSG) automatic gearbox. On the petrol side, there's a 104bhp 1.2-litre TSI, a 148bhp 1.4 TSI (a rare find in the classifieds) and a 158bhp 1.8-litre TSI. The 1.2 is the ideal companion for town driving and will return about 50mpg day to day. But you're more likely to end up in a diesel, as the majority of examples were fitted with the bulletproof 2.0 TDI engine, which was offered with 108bhp, 138bhp or 168bhp.

Aim for the 138bhp or 168bhp and you will have a diesel Yeti with plenty of low-end grunt and four-wheel drive. A 4x4 model will still do around 45mpg and the extra driven axle is handy for towing or negotiating a muddy field.

Strap on a set of winter boots and you will find the Yeti could even be the ideal car for climbing into the Himalayas to search for its namesake. Or you could just use it to go to the tip, and it will be good at that too.

SAM PHILLIPS

What we said then

7 OCTOBER 2009

"The Skoda Yeti takes established VW hardware and pieces them together cleverly to present a well-engineered, practical car with a mix of abilities to address a variety of customer needs. While Skoda may not have aimed the Yeti at the enthusiast, by giving its controls an accuracy and honesty it has made a car that is good to drive."

You can have FWD or 4WD, and the latter won't punish you at the pumps



"It drives more like a hatchback than an SUV, with surprising agility, grip and balance"



4x4 fan with a very light Cross to bear

For today's battered asphalt, Jack Anderson reckons he has the perfect car: a Fiat Panda Cross. "Driving on the roads here in Hampshire, you need something that can take the rough with the smooth and the Cross does easily," he says. "The suspension is soft and forgiving, so unless they're really deep, potholes aren't a problem, while on smooth roads it rolls along nicely."

While some may dream of lowering and stiffening their car's suspension, Jack is keen to go the other way: "I like to sit high up, rather than close to the road. My ultimate car would be a Toyota Land Cruiser. I'll have one, one day."

However, for the moment, a Panda will have to do. This small 4x4 is powered by an even smaller, 875cc two-cylinder petrol engine.

Jack bought the car only last February and has done no more than 2000 miles in it but he's already in love: "It's terrific. I'd always wanted a 4x4 daily driver. I would have liked a Suzuki Jimny, because they're cool, but according to my mate who had one, they're not great on the road. The Panda is good on the road but just as capable off it and altogether more fun, I reckon."

It was registered in 2014 and has done 64,000 miles – as far as Jack



Our cars

Happy car ownership on a shoestring



BY MATT PRIOR

I'm not yet tired of writing 'my Audi A2', such is the novelty of recently buying one of Audi's advanced aluminium superminis, without an MOT, for £500.

I'm also – and this is not true of every car I have – a good owner. I knew it needed a rear wheel bearing, so I bought one (£30) and changed it without breaking anything else. It failed an MOT on headlight alignment and handbrake strength, so I adjusted both of those, plus I cleaned an advisory-noted cloudy headlight and sent it for retesting.

So I now have a 22-year-old car with a completely clean bill of health that has cost me £530, or less than £900 including the two

tests, £250 insurance and £35 tax.

The ride is a bit firm, so I would like smaller wheels and narrower, higher-profile tyres. A friend sent

me an original brochure, so I can see this model had sporty suspension. I wonder if some fancy dampers and new



Prior can see clearly now the clouds have gone



bushes would help it. I'm torn between making it great or just seeing how cheaply one can run a car. I think I'll do the cheap thing for a year, then see how much I still like writing 'my A2' before doing anything else.

Cross got more off-roading hardware than standard Panda 4x4 – but not a bigger engine



off-road activity venue near Market Harborough in Leicestershire. They have a 'pay and play day' when you can take your off-roader around their 10 acres of old quarry and woodland."

The Panda Cross is front-wheel drive most of the time but will automatically engage the rear at speeds below 30mph when it detects wheel slip. Alternatively, Jack can manually select four-wheel drive via a small rotary controller between the front seats.

"It's a really good system," he says. "Plus, to back it up, there's hill descent control that automatically takes care of the speed and braking."

With only a sub-1.0-litre engine under the bonnet, you might think this Panda would be slow, but Jack has been pleasantly surprised by its performance: "The car weighs no more than 1100kg, and although it's not very torquey, the engine is quite peppy. First is only a crawler gear, so you have to get it into second pretty quickly, but do that and you can make decent progress."

Finished in bright yellow, Jack's Panda really stands out among the larger and more powerful motors parked nearby at his local car meet. The roof bars are a nice touch, I note. "I saw them on eBay and thought they were just what it needed," says Jack. "They make it look like a proper activity vehicle."

That impression is only enhanced when I open the rear doors to find a pair of crash helmets swinging from the front headrests. "Me and my mate wear them when we go karting," explains Jack. They may need to wear them when they tackle Avalanche Adventure too.

JOHN EVANS

"I'm going to fit smaller wheels with big all-terrain tyres and then raise the suspension"

can tell, most of them on road. He has been trying it off road: baby steps at first in muddy car parks at car meets, where it has crawled through the ooze without fuss, but now he has more ambitious plans.

"I'm going to fit smaller wheels with big all-terrain tyres and then raise the suspension – the usual off-road mods," he says. "When that's done, I'm going to take it to Avalanche Adventure, the

Everything is analogue and manual in here, just as the off-roading hardcore like it

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



DACIA SANDERO STEPWAY 1.0 TCE PRESTIGE

2022, 10,000 miles, £12,995

With its chunky, rugged styling and economical little 1.0-litre engine, this Stepway is just as fun and capable as the Panda (left). Plus it's spacious, it has plenty of standard kit and it should average 50mpg.



KIA PICANTO 1.0 T-GDI

2022, 4500 miles, £14,395

Phone mirroring, heated seats and a heated steering wheel: this low-mileage Picanto has all the right features to make city work that bit comfier – and GT-Line S trim makes it look great too. Like the Stepway above, it will regularly achieve 50mpg and it has a full service history.



SEAT MII ELECTRIC 36.8KWH

2021, 29,000 miles, £8995

Want a climate-conscious city car? This tidy Mii should serve you well. A real-world range of 140 miles is enough for urban commutes and school runs, and it won't need a service or MOT until April next year.



SUZUKI JIMNY 1.5 SZ5 ALLGRIP

2019, 47,000 miles, £21,995

Suzuki's tiny 4x4 makes an endearing left-field city car choice. This one is quite rare in being a UK-supplied four-seat car, and it's said to be in "outstanding condition". It has a full Suzuki service history, a long MOT and new front tyres too.



MURRAY SCULLION



2019 PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO S

VS

JONATHAN BRYCE



2023 BMW 545E

Head to head

Brief: Find a plug-in hybrid that's fast, practical and fun

JB No budget here, which is great. I wonder quite how 'practical' practical needs to be...

MSc I was thinking McLaren P1 or Ferrari SF90 initially. But let's agree that it needs to house golf clubs.

JB Okay, well how about this £43k 545e saloon? A BMW straight six for faster driving and an electric motor for town work sounds great.

MSc I agree, and I think that is a wonderful car. But I win, because I have a £52k V8 Panamera. I always thought that V6 PHEV system used within the Volkswagen Group was a bit weedy. But the V8 one: wow.

JB What you have there is a nice car in vomit specification. Mine is less money and nearly as refined. Also it's a BMW. It will be at least as fun to drive and cheaper to run.

MSc I will admit that it is blue and gold with luminous green calipers. But 679bhp is 679bhp.

JB Exactly. My car looks good. Plus this generation of 5 Series is the easiest to use, with both buttons and iDrive. Mine has also done only 8921 miles – it's barely run-in.

MSc What is it with BMW nerds and iDrive? It's all very Freudian. I will admit that yours is the logical choice. Perhaps mine is the one you would choose if you were feeling very brave.

ALA

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The Autocar

Lost in the archive



A third of Sterling dealers sold them alongside Cadillacs

Rover's American dream turns sour

"This is the finest luxury car and the best executed solution yet to the demands of the US luxury car market," declared Norman Braman – and he should have known, as the magnate leading a successful dealership group that sold Cadillacs, Maseratis, Porsches, BMWs and even Rolls-Royces. The car in question? British Leyland's prototypical XX of 1985 – later to emerge as the Rover 800 Series.

As recently as 1982, Rover had left the US after two years of dreadful SD1 fastback sales – a repeat of the P6 saloon's performance, fewer than 1500 having sold annually until Rover had given up in 1971. But the XX indeed seemed ideally formulated, combining the famed appeal of British style with the best aspects of Japanese cars, which were gobbling up ever larger portions of the US market, as a mechanical twin of Honda's HX – later to be launched as the first-ever Acura model, the Legend.

Those best aspects were production quality, reliability and refinement. "If we miss there," Rover exports boss Peter Johnson told Autocar, "we are doomed to failure."

Rover's sales target was 20,000, rising sharply to 40,000, through 100 dealers, targeting the east and west coasts. To give them the best chance, it elected to ditch its tainted brand name, testing

20 alternatives in customer clinics, of which Sterling was deemed best.

When XX prototypes were sent to Chicago to woo prospective dealers, 850 were expected but 1100 showed up, among them representatives of Cadillac, BMW, Audi, Lincoln, Saab, Jaguar, Volvo and Mercedes – and they "spontaneously burst into applause" when the sheets came off.

The public finally saw the Sterling 825 in late 1986, identical to Britain's Rover 825 but for extra equipment and some modifications to satisfy federal emissions and safety rules.

"With the possible exception of the Concorde, no machine so nicely

put together has ever before come out of England," declared American magazine Car and Driver in early 1987, and 4199 were sold in the first three months – right on target.

However, the car sent to Road and Track mag suffered several issues, and soon after the American Consumers' Union published a damning report, identifying 15 faults, concerning the electric seat adjustment, door fitting, sunroof mechanism, courtesy light, cruise control and even the speedometer.

"Our car betrayed a lack of quality control that would be a disgrace in a car costing one quarter as much," the non-profit body railed.

Rover responded angrily: "The car tested was one of the earliest to go to the US and many of the little niggling faults have already been put right." And its US arm added: "We were disappointed by the tone of the review. We don't understand some of their comments and they haven't returned our calls. But we don't think it will have an effect on sales. The publicity for the car has been overwhelmingly positive."

Wrong. By mid-1988, only 500-700 Sterlings were being sold monthly – attributed to misguided marketing but probably more likely due to the brand finishing bottom of the JD Power dealer satisfaction survey, some way behind even Yugo, while its sibling Acura was ranked top.

This was mainly due to the cars'

poor quality but also a public spat between Rover and its US arm that had led to Braman being bought out.

Sales totals continued to plummet, despite a change of tack in Sterling's marketing, and soon some dealers were having to offer \$5000 'rebates'.

By then, it was already on its third boss. Graham Morris's job was to put it all right, and in December 1989 he claimed: "We now pay our warranty on time, our communication is a lot better, we deliver parts on time, we're doing a lot more to support [dealers] with training and we're offering them better products."

Sales had accordingly gone back up – but only to around 500 a month, less than 10% of the Legend's, and come December 1990 an Orlando dealer told us he was selling just one car a month and thus losing money.

"I'd be telling a lie if I said I wasn't frustrated," conceded Morris. "The company and the people deserve more than I've been able to do."

The US entering a recession was the final straw, and Rover gave up on America for the third time in August 1991, never again to return.

KRIS CULMER



Hatch followed saloon (above) with larger new Honda V6



Legend had no quality issues and sold 10 times more than its British cousin

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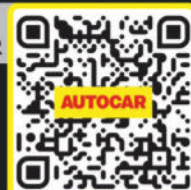
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Autocar's history of empirical road testing is the longest in the world. For more than a century, we have been verifying, scrutinising, describing and illustrating new cars in unparalleled detail. Driving impressions have always been a key part of this, around which the empirical tests have changed.

In pre-war years, we concerned ourselves with braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later our attention shifted to take in acceleration, top speed, stopping distance and cruising noise level.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars –

and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated states of battery charge.

Our tests are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car – and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into that century of road testing with a subscription to the digital Autocar archive (visit themagazineshop.com/2025ED/ACA).

Matt Saunders, road test editor

STAR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Autocar star ratings aren't like those you may read elsewhere. We don't simply give the best car in any given class five stars, the worst one star and filter the rest in between.

Rather than thinking in entirely relative terms, we rank cars according to more abstract definitions of their performance, functionality and fitness for purpose, so that every particular verdict means something and has a degree of permanence.

We also penalise cars up to a star for what we consider particularly conspicuous and regressive failings concerning active safety systems or missing instrumentation or physical secondary controls.

☆ Hopeless, egregious. In some cases, potentially dangerous.

★ Appalling. An emphatic failure.

★ Very poor. Consistently flawed or seriously misconceived.

★☆☆ Inadequate. Sub-standard in key areas.

★★ Mediocre. Acceptable at best.

★★★ Competent. Mostly average, with very few highlights.

★★★★ Respectable. Consistently decent, with some strengths.

★★★★★ Good. Well rounded and competitive in key areas.

★★★★★ Very good. Sets some new class standards and misses few.

★★★★★ Excellent. Extends several key class standards.

★★★★★ Exceptional, unsurpassed. All but flawless.

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
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ABARTH

500 Esseesse ★★★★★ 25.3.09
Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.
7.6 6.5 1135 35.8 -

500e Turismo ★★★★★ 9.8.23
A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.
6.9 6.4 1395 - 142

595 Competizione ★★★★★ 26.2.14
Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.
7.5 6.4 1135 39.2 -

ALFA ROMEO

Giulia Quadrifoglio ★★★★★ 29.3.17
Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.
4.5 3.2 1700 35.7 -

Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione ★★★★★ 3.1.18
Likeable, if short of class's usual refinements.
6.8 7.0 1815 49.7 -

Stelvio Quadrifoglio ★★★★★ 9.1.19
A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.
4.0 3.3 1931 31.9 -

Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD ★★★★★ 28.6.23
Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.
5.7 5.3 1784 32.2 -

ALPINE

A110 Première Edition ★★★★★ 16.5.18
Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.
4.7 3.8 1125 45.6 -

A110 Légende GT ★★★★★ 9.3.22
The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.
4.8 3.9 1140 40.2 -

A110 R ★★★★★ 15.11.23
Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.
4.2 3.5 1094 39.7 -

ARIEL

Atom 4 ★★★★★ 9.10.19
Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.
3.2 2.4 680 39.2 -

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
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ASTON MARTIN

Vantage ★★★★★ 18.9.24
Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.
3.5 2.6 1745 28.5 -

DBS Superleggera ★★★★★ 21.11.18
Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.
3.7 2.7 1910 25.6 -

Vanquish ★★★★★ 26.3.25
Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT.
3.1 2.3 1951 25.8 -

DBX 707 ★★★★★ 30.11.22
A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.
3.3 2.8 2278 26.2 -

AUDI

A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition ★★★★★ 2.10.19
Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.
7.9 8.4 1209 57.0 -

S3 Sportback ★★★★★ 18.11.20
Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.
4.8 4.2 1552 39.0 -

RS4 Avant ★★★★★ 14.2.18
A hot estate that oozes class but is curiously short on charisma.
4.0 3.5 1790 36.7 -

S5 Launch Edition ★★★★★ 15.1.25
Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.
4.1 3.8 2027 33.7 -

A6 50 TFSIe Quattro S Line ★★★★★ 5.1.22
Hybrid tech boosts saloon's refinement, charm and running credentials.
5.7 5.2 2077 45.4 34

S6 E-tron Avant Launch Edition ★★★★★ 16.4.25
Strong technical showing is undermined by price and lack of discernible character.
3.7 2.9 2346 2.8 256

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
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RS6 Avant GT ★★★★★ 5.2.25
Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.
3.2 2.7 2144 26.3 -

A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport ★★★★★ 11.7.18
Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.
5.8 5.3 1880 53.1 -

A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport ★★★★★ 17.6.20
Technically impressive but not as cossetting as a limo ought to be.
- - 2330 - -

E-tron 55 Quattro ★★★★★ 26.6.19
A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.
5.4 4.2 2569 - 218

E-tron S Quattro ★★★★★ 2.6.21
A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.
4.2 3.6 2643 - -

Q21.4 TFSI Sport ★★★★★ 9.11.16
Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.
8.1 8.2 1316 - -

SQ2 Quattro S Tronic ★★★★★ 20.3.19
More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.
4.5 4.1 1530 34.5 -

Q4 E-tron 40 Sport ★★★★★ 7.7.21
Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.
8.1 7.8 2112 - -

Q5 TDI Quattro 204PS S Line ★★★★★ 14.5.25
Pleasant and competitive but no particular step forward.
6.7 7.1 2072 42.6 -

Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1 ★★★★★ 2.10.24
EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.
5.3 4.3 - 2.8 247

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
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Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line ★★★★★ 12.8.15
Plush, suave and spacious but so-so to drive.
6.2 6.2 2245 - -

SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro ★★★★★ 26.10.16
A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.
5.1 4.5 2330 37.9 -

Q8 50 TDI S Line ★★★★★ 26.9.18
Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.
6.9 6.7 2285 40.1 -

R8 V10 Plus ★★★★★ 30.12.15
Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.
3.1 2.6 1730 - -

SE-tron GT ★★★★★ 2.4.25
Audi's super-EV holds great appeal in its purest form but isn't at the bleeding edge.
3.1 2.4 2361 2.8 262

BENTLEY

Bentayga W12 ★★★★★ 18.5.16
Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.
4.9 4.4 2440 - -

Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline ★★★★★ 24.4.24
Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.
4.4 3.8 2600 25.6 -

Continental GT Speed ★★★★★ 22.12.21
Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.
3.4 2.7 2279 22.0 -

Continental GTC V8 S ★★★★★ 19.4.23
Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.
3.6 3.2 2295 29.1 -

Continental GT Speed Hybrid First Edition ★★★★★ 16.4.25
Electrons make fastest GT quicker but not necessarily better.
3.1 2.5 2462 28.0 47

Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner ★★★★★ 17.8.22
Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.
4.4 3.9 2596 30.1 28

0-60mph
30-70mph
Kerb weight
Touring economy
Electric range

Flying Spur Speed First Edition ★★★★★ 21.5.25
Hulking V8 hybrid powertrain broadens Spur's remit and skyrockets performance.
3.2 2.7 2750 26.7 44

BMW
120 M Sport ★★★★★ 31.12.24
Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.
7.3 6.8 1489 45.8 -

218i M Sport Gran Coupé ★★★★★ 8.4.20
Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.
8.8 8.4 1375 58.2 -

220i M Sport Coupé ★★★★★ 1.6.22
A good coupé rather than a great sports car.
7.3 7.3 1546 46.8 -

M2 Coupé Manual ★★★★★ 12.7.23
Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.
4.5 3.8 1687 32.1 -

320d M Sport Auto ★★★★★ 15.5.19
BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.
6.9 6.8 1639 63.3 -

330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring ★★★★★ 15.1.20
An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.
5.5 5.2 1922 52.6 -

330e M Sport ★★★★★ 1.7.20
Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.
- - 1740 - -

M440i xDrive ★★★★★ 6.1.21
A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.
4.1 3.7 1775 44.0 -

M4 Competition ★★★★★ 21.4.21
A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.
3.9 2.9 1800 32.7 -

M4 CS ★★★★★ 23.4.25
Stunning performance and pace comes with costs that aren't so easy to justify.
2.9 2.5 1747 32.4 -

i4 M50 ★★★★★ 19.1.22
Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.
4.1 3.2 2248 - 186

M4 CSL ★★★★★ 16.11.22
A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.
3.6 2.7 1625 31.1 -

M5 ★★★★★ 29.1.25
A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.
3.5 2.8 2373 27.3 35

i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro ★★★★★ 29.11.23
Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.
5.4 4.4 2213 - 235

550e xDrive M Sport Pro ★★★★★ 3.4.24
Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.
4.4 3.5 2232 40.1 47

i7 xDrive60 M Sport ★★★★★ 15.2.23
It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.
4.5 3.4 2758 - 264

0-60mph
30-70mph
Kerb weight
Touring economy
Electric range

840d xDrive ★★★★★ 16.1.19
A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.
5.0 4.6 1901 49.2 -

M8 Competition Convertible ★★★★★ 5.2.20
Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.
3.3 2.7 2020 31.6 -

M8 Competition ★★★★★ 3.6.20
Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.
- - 1960 - -

X1 xDrive23i M Sport ★★★★★ 25.1.23
A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.
6.4 6.0 1800 45.6 -

X4 M Competition ★★★★★ 13.11.19
Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.
4.0 3.3 2028 29.0 -

X5 xDrive30d M Sport ★★★★★ 2.1.19
Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.
6.6 6.6 2279 43.1 -

X6 M Competition ★★★★★ 20.3.24
Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.
3.5 3.1 2442 29.3 -

X7 M60i xDrive ★★★★★ 29.3.23
Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.
4.2 3.7 2600 28.9 -

iX xDrive50 M Sport ★★★★★ 2.3.22
Takes the luxury EV to elevated heights, but its design is easy to criticise.
4.4 3.4 2593 - 252

Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack ★★★★★ 21.8.24
Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.
5.7 5.9 1561 36.9 -

BMW ALPINA
B3 GT Touring ★★★★★ 15.1.25
Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.
3.3 2.7 1910 29.4 -

B8 Gran Coupé ★★★★★ 22.9.21
Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.
3.5 2.8 2100 - -

BYD
Atto 3 Design ★★★★★ 31.5.23
Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.
7.0 6.2 1787 - 201

Seal Design ★★★★★ 17.1.24
Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.
5.8 4.7 2116 - 279

CATERHAM
Seven 160 ★★★★★ 20.11.13
Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.
8.4 8.7 510 44.8 -

Seven 620S ★★★★★ 9.3.16
Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.
3.8 4.2 650 29.5 -

Seven 420 Cup ★★★★★ 31.8.22
Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.
4.2 3.4 560 35.3 -

0-60mph
30-70mph
Kerb weight
Touring economy
Electric range

CHEVROLET
Corvette 3LT ★★★★★ 22.6.22
Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.
3.9 3.2 1679 32.9 -

Corvette Z06 3LZ ★★★★★ 16.8.23
Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.
3.1 2.4 1670 26.1 -

CITROËN
Ami Colour ★★★★★ 11.1.23
Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.
- - 471 - 39

ë-C3 Max ★★★★★ 30.4.25
Predictable limitations but also plenty of usability, space and cheer for the money.
10.7 10.3 1479 2.8 -

C3 Aircross Puretech 110 Flair ★★★★★ 7.3.18
Practical small crossover isn't outstanding to drive but is likeable nonetheless.
11.5 10.7 1159 39.5 -

C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto ★★★★★ 26.5.21
Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.
9.5 9.2 1320 56.4 -

ë-C4 X Shine ★★★★★ 3.5.23
EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.
9.7 8.8 1623 - 162

C5 Aircross BlueHDI 180 Flair Plus ★★★★★ 13.2.19
Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.
9.0 8.5 1540 47.8 -

C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus ★★★★★ 28.9.22
Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.
7.8 7.1 1502 47.8 -

CUPRA
Born 204PS 58kWh V3 ★★★★★ 6.7.22
As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.
6.7 6.2 1794 - 220

Born VZ First Edition ★★★★★ 9.10.24
An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.
5.4 4.2 1996 3.5 269

Leon Estate 310PS VZ3 ★★★★★ 8.9.21
Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.
4.9 4.3 1707 40.1 -

Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2 ★★★★★ 27.7.22
Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.
5.9 4.7 1468 43.4 -

Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG ★★★★★ 23.1.19
Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.
4.9 4.4 1615 36.7 -

Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG ★★★★★ 3.2.21
Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.
5.1 4.3 1583 36.4 -

Tavascan V1 ★★★★★ 5.2.25
Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.
6.0 5.0 2129 3.2 246

0-60mph
30-70mph
Kerb weight
Touring economy
Electric range

DACIA
Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige ★★★★★ 28.4.21
Cut-price crossover is compromised in surprisingly few areas.
11.9 11.9 1096 54.1 -

Duster Hybrid 140 Journey ★★★★★ 27.11.24
Notably improved yet barely any pricier.
9.7 8.7 1413 40.2 -

Jogger TCe 110 Comfort ★★★★★ 20.4.22
Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.
11.0 11.0 1267 48.5 -

DS
3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige ★★★★★ 10.7.19
No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.
8.8 8.3 1205 48.6 -

4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+ ★★★★★ 29.6.22
High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.
7.4 6.0 1706 44.7 26

7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige ★★★★★ 19.9.18
DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.
8.6 7.0 1616 44.6 -

7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première ★★★★★ 26.4.23
More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.
5.7 4.6 1956 36.6 29

9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus ★★★★★ 2.2.22
Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.
8.6 7.1 1886 44.7 20

FERRARI
296 GTB ★★★★★ 21.12.22
Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.
2.7 1.9 1648 37.8 15

SF90 Stradale ★★★★★ 3.11.21
Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.
2.5 1.8 1698 24.4 16

FIAT
500 Twinair Lounge ★★★★★ 24.11.10
Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.
11.7 13.0 1070 42.1 -

500C1.2 Pop ★★★★★ 5.8.09
Landaulet hits the spot every bit as well as the regular hatchback and is often better.
13.2 14.4 1035 48.3 -

500e 42kWh Icon ★★★★★ 26.1.22
More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.
8.1 7.7 1365 - 142

600e La Prima ★★★★★ 27.3.24
Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.
8.8 7.7 1587 - 173

FORD
Fiesta 1.0 Ecoboost 125PS Titanium ★★★★★ 9.8.17
A dynamically brilliant supermini but no longer the best one.
6.6 7.8 1218 48.2 -

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fiesta ST ★★★★★ 15.8.18				
Great to drive and supreme value but not better than before in all aspects.				
6.6	7.8	1218	48.2	-
Focus 1.5 EcoBoost 182PS ST-Line X ★★★★★ 20.2.19				
Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.				
8.9	7.8	1417	43.8	-
Focus ST ★★★★★ 11.9.19				
Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.				
6.1	4.9	1433	40.7	-
Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium ★★★★★ 25.3.20				
The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.				
10.0	9.6	1260	50.0	-
Puma ST ★★★★★ 24.3.21				
Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.				
7.2	6.2	1301	41.5	-
Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD ★★★★★ 23.10.24				
Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.				
5.8	4.8	2067	2.9	262
Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line ★★★★★ 24.6.20				
Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.				
-	-	1844	-	-
Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD ★★★★★ 23.6.21				
Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.				
6.8	5.6	2130	-	-
Mustang Mach-E GT AWD ★★★★★ 27.4.22				
Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.				
4.2	3.5	2298	-	-
Mustang Dark Horse ★★★★★ 20.11.24				
Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.				
4.5	3.5	1853	26.1	-
Tourneo Courier 1.0 EcoBoost Titanium ★★★★★ 10.7.24				
Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.				
10.8	10.6	1426	47.4	-
Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited ★★★★★ 8.5.24				
Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.				
12.1	11.8	1971	38.8	-
Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak ★★★★★ 14.6.23				
Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.				
9.8	9.9	2348	36.6	-
F-150 Lightning Platinum ★★★★★ 17.5.23				
Electric truck has huge utility and appealing range, but its size and price will put many off.				
4.5	3.7	3121	-	288
GENESIS				
G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line ★★★★★ 10.11.21				
Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.				
7.2	6.7	1751	60.4	-

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Electrified G80 ★★★★★ 12.10.22				
Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.				
4.4	4.0	2349	-	272
GV60 Sport Plus ★★★★★ 24.8.22				
Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.				
3.8	3.1	2192	-	220
GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater ★★★★★ 15.9.21				
Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.				
6.7	6.6	2217	45.0	-
GWM ORA				
Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition ★★★★★ 1.2.23				
Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.				
7.7	7.2	1580	-	154
HONDA				
E Advance ★★★★★ 26.8.20				
More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.				
7.9	-	1535	-	110
Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX ★★★★★ 7.10.20				
Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.				
9.6	10.0	1248	57.0	-
Civic Type R GT ★★★★★ 25.10.17				
Hot hatch is a sheer delight for enthusiast drivers and their bank balances.				
5.7	7.1	1400	57.0	-
HR-V e:HEV Advance Style ★★★★★ 24.11.21				
Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.				
9.2	9.3	1397	43.2	-
e:Ny1 Advance ★★★★★ 1.11.23				
EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.				
8.6	6.9	1756	-	211
HYUNDAI				
i10 1.2 MPI Premium ★★★★★ 15.4.20				
Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.				
12.3	12.9	999	52.5	-
i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect ★★★★★ 24.2.21				
Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.				
9.7	10.1	1065	63.5	-
i20 N ★★★★★ 25.8.21				
N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.				
6.1	5.4	1231	50.6	-
i30 Tourer 1.4 T-GDi Premium SE ★★★★★ 13.9.17				
Competent, servile, inoffensive-looking family estate offers little to like or dislike.				
9.5	9.7	1425	48.9	-
i30 N Performance ★★★★★ 28.12.17				
Hyundai's first hot hatch attempt is fast and full-blooded with rough edges.				
6.4	5.6	1478	43.1	-
Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate ★★★★★ 7.6.23				
Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.				
7.2	6.2	2006	-	272

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Kona 1.0 120PS Advance ★★★★★ 6.9.23				
Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.				
10.4	10.3	1352	50.4	-
Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium ★★★★★ 17.3.21				
Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.				
7.6	6.2	1612	47.7	-
Ioniq 5 N ★★★★★ 7.8.24				
A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.				
3.5	2.7	2221	-	224
Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium ★★★★★ 16.10.24				
A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.				
7.9	7.5	2007	32.9	-
Nexo ★★★★★ 12.6.19				
Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.				
9.6	9.7	1852	-	-
INEOS				
Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster ★★★★★ 20.9.23				
Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.				
8.0	8.1	2682	20.9	-
JAECOO				
7 SHS 2WD Luxury ★★★★★ 9.4.25				
Chinese PHEV SUV is efficient and keenly priced but has too many usability flaws.				
7.3	6.4	1814	35.0	41
JAGUAR				
XE 2.0 200PS R-Sport ★★★★★ 1.7.15				
Junior saloon hits the spot, matching the best of its German rivals at their own game.				
7.6	6.7	1530	48.7	-
XF Sportbrake 300PS R-Sport AWD ★★★★★ 17.4.19				
Estate is built on enthusiast values but in need of a wider update.				
6.6	6.2	1727	36.8	-
E-Pace D180 AWD SE ★★★★★ 11.4.18				
Misses the mark for keen drivers but is a desirable SUV nevertheless.				
9.9	10.5	1768	49.2	-
I-Pace EV400 S ★★★★★ 12.9.18				
Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.				
4.5	3.5	2236	-	-
F-Pace SVR ★★★★★ 24.7.19				
Broad-batted and can vividly thrill but hasn't forgotten its SUV roots.				
4.1	3.5	2070	29.4	-
F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE ★★★★★ 1.12.21				
Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.				
5.1	4.6	2264	-	24
F-Type P575 R AWD Coupé ★★★★★ 29.4.20				
The same likeable bruiser behind those prettier features.				
-	-	1743	-	-
JEEP				
Avenger Electric Summit ★★★★★ 24.1.24				
Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.				
8.3	6.9	1601	-	172

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★★★ 3.10.18				
Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.				
11.0	11.5	1540	44.8	-
Compass 4xe S ★★★★★ 16.2.22				
Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.				
6.4	5.7	1872	46.9	22
Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★★★ 28.10.15				
Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.				
10.8	11.2	1502	52.6	-
Renegade 4xe Trailhawk ★★★★★ 30.6.21				
Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.				
6.7	5.6	1816	39.4	21
Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland ★★★★★ 10.4.19				
Off-road icon is now more competent on it.				
9.0	9.1	2122	37.6	-
KGM				
Tivoli XLV ELX Auto ★★★★★ 14.9.16				
Practical, well-priced crossover is competent but far from compelling.				
12.0	12.6	1469	-	-
KIA				
Picanto 1.0 MPI 2 ★★★★★ 11.9.24				
No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.				
13.4	13.9	985	51.4	-

TOP 3

BEST LARGE SUVs



1 Range Rover Sport



2 BMW X5



3 Land Rover Defender

SCAN THE
CODE TO SEE
THE TOP 10



Road tests revisited



2007 AUDI R8 4.2 FSI QUATTRO

Brand's first supercar "is quick, handles and rides amazingly well and sounds good close to the redline". It "may lack in raw driver involvement compared with its arch-rival, the Porsche 911 Carrera S, but is better as an everyday machine".

Price £85,485
Engine V8, 4163cc, petrol
Power 414bhp at 7800rpm
Torque 317lb ft at 4500rpm
Weight 1560kg
0-60mph 4.4sec
0-100mph 10.5sec
Top speed 187mph
Economy 15.5mpg



1938 MERCEDES-BENZ 540K

"Germany's foremost production car" is a big cabriolet that offers "fierce acceleration" with the blower on or is "quiet and docile" without. "Can be cornered very fast indeed" yet also gives an "extremely comfortable" ride.

Price £1890
Engine 8 cyls in line, 5401cc, supercharged, petrol
Power 178bhp at 3400rpm (est)
Torque 318lb ft at 2200rpm (est)
Weight 2621kg
0-30mph 5.5sec
0-60mph 16.4sec
Top speed 111mph (est)
Economy 10.5mpg

READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE*



0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Ceed 1.6 CRDi 115bhp 2 ★★★★★ 29.8.18

Big step up in the family hatchback class is a watershed moment for Kia.

9.9 9.6 1411 70.3 -

Proceed 1.4 T-GDi GT-Line S ★★★★★ 27.2.19

Alluring and interesting but not quite as special to drive as it looks.

9.5 8.9 1475 42.6 -

Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition ★★★★★ 20.11.19

Looks good and drives well but lacks some practicality and polish.

9.3 8.7 1452 46.8 -

Soul EV Urban ★★★★★ 5.7.23

Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.

8.0 8.3 1569 - 147

Niro EV 3 ★★★★★ 7.9.22

A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.

6.9 5.6 1739 - 246

EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line ★★★★★ 31.12.24

New-era Niro is rationally compelling but not a game-changer.

7.2 6.4 1858 2.6 265

Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S ★★★★★ 15.6.22

Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive.

7.3 6.4 1658 44.8 -

EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S ★★★★★ 9.10.24

Not the outstanding EV it once was but still a likeably bold choice.

7.5 6.3 - 2.9 227

EV6 GT ★★★★★ 4.10.23

Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.

3.6 2.7 2161 - 209

Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2 ★★★★★ 20.1.21

Lacks polish, but its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.

8.5 7.9 2006 43.3 -

EV9 GT-Line S ★★★★★ 31.1.24

Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.

5.1 4.6 2660 - 220

LAMBORGHINI

Huracán Performante ★★★★★ 11.10.17

Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.

2.9 2.0 1590 22.4 -

Huracán Evo RWD ★★★★★ 20.5.20

Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.

- - 1389 - -

Revuelto ★★★★★ 4.12.24

New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.

2.5 1.7 1960 24.1 6

Urus ★★★★★ 3.7.19

Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind.

3.3 2.8 2285 28.5 -

LAND ROVER

Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE ★★★★★ 10.2.21

A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.

6.8 5.9 2158 32.7 24

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE ★★★★★ 8.1.20

Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.

10.3 10.5 2145 47.5 -

Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury ★★★★★ 12.4.17

A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.

8.7 8.8 2230 - -

Range Rover Velar D240 HSE ★★★★★ 30.8.17

Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.

9.3 9.0 2089 48.2 -

Defender 110 P400 X ★★★★★ 13.5.20

World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.

- - 2388 - -

Defender 110 P635 Octa Edition 1 ★★★★★ 30.4.25

Outrageous, unnecessary and totally awe-inspiring.

4.6 3.7 2717 22.1 -

Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE ★★★★★ 2.11.22

Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.

7.2 6.6 2511 42.5 -

Range Rover Sport SV Edition One ★★★★★ 28.8.24

More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.

3.9 5.1 2546 28.9 -

Range Rover D350 HSE ★★★★★ 13.7.22

A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.

6.3 6.0 2667 35.9 -

Range Rover P550e Autobiography ★★★★★ 9.4.25

A unique and enthralling character that brings added refinement in PHEV form.

4.9 4.0 2979 26.6 44

LEXUS

LBX FWD Premium Plus Design ★★★★★ 29.5.24

Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.

8.4 8.4 1306 45.2 -

NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack ★★★★★ 16.3.22

Interesting, refined and efficient, but not as polished as the best.

7.1 6.7 1812 44.7 -

RX 500h F Sport ★★★★★ 22.3.23

Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.

6.1 5.5 2088 31.7 -

ES 300h Takumi ★★★★★ 6.2.19

Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.

8.7 7.6 1742 48.8 -

RC F Ultimate Edition ★★★★★ 6.11.24

Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.

4.7 3.8 1733 30.1 -

LM 350h AWD Takumi ★★★★★ 7.2.24

MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.

8.6 8.2 2368 40.5 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

LOTUS

Emira V6 First Edition ★★★★★ 2.4.25

The British sports car is alive, well and expensive.

4.4 4.0 1493 29.0 -

Eletre R ★★★★★ 24.7.24

There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.

3.1 2.2 2682 - 216

MASERATI

Ghibli Diesel ★★★★★ 12.3.14

Saloon isn't lacking in style but is a little short on substance.

6.5 6.0 2040 40.4 -

Grecale Trofeo ★★★★★ 18.10.23

A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.

3.6 3.2 2097 33.6 -

Levante Diesel ★★★★★ 30.11.16

A mildly interesting also-ran, with a weak engine and so-so handling.

6.8 6.9 2205 41.5 -

Levante S Granlusso ★★★★★ 8.5.19

Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it.

5.1 4.5 2232 23.7 -

Granturismo Trofeo ★★★★★ 11.9.24

An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.

3.6 3.1 - 33.0 -

Granturismo Folgore ★★★★★ 26.2.25

Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.

2.9 2.3 2358 2.3 183

MC20 Cielo ★★★★★ 16.10.24

Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.

4.0 2.8 1783 29.6 -

MAZDA

21.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav ★★★★★ 22.4.15

The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.

10.4 11.0 1050 - -

32.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport ★★★★★ 6.11.19

Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.

9.1 9.1 1425 57.0 -

MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech ★★★★★ 10.3.21

Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.

9.1 8.6 1663 - -

CX-302.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line ★★★★★ 19.2.25

Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.

7.6 7.6 1422 45.2 -

CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav ★★★★★ 28.6.17

Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.

9.4 9.2 1620 53.9 -

CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line ★★★★★ 10.5.23

Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.

7.6 7.2 1893 52.3 -

MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav ★★★★★ 2.9.15

An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.

8.4 7.9 1050 - -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

McLAREN

720S ★★★★★ 24.5.17

Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.

2.9 2.0 1419 24.2 -

750S ★★★★★

19.6.24

McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.

2.9 2.0 1412 28.8 -

Artura ★★★★★

19.10.22

Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.

3.2 2.1 1552 32.9 17

Artura Spider ★★★★★

6.11.24

Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.

3.1 2.2 1618 27.2 17

GT ★★★★★

27.1.21

Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.

3.3 2.3 1580 34.2

MERCEDES-AMG

A45 S 4Matic+ Plus ★★★★★ 4.3.20

AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.

4.1 3.3 1661 41.5 -

C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate

31.7.24

Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.

3.3 2.8 2217 27.1 7.1

GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé

13.3.19

AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.

3.3 2.7 2135 30.1 -

GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé

21.6.23

Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.

2.9 2.5 2339 23.9 6

EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition

8.6.22

Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.

3.6 2.8 2673 - 259

S63 E Performance Night Edition

2.10.24

Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.

3.5 2.7 2666 26.1 -

GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus

14.10.20

Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.

5.4 4.9 2471 29.4 -

SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus

26.7.23

Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.

3.5 2.8 1939 26.2 -

GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé

14.8.24

Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.

3.1 2.7 1972 30.7 -

MERCEDES-BENZ

A200 AMG Line Executive

24.5.23

Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.

7.8 7.3 1396 59.3 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

A250e AMG Line Premium

5.8.20

Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.

6.7 5.4 1665 57.8 -

B180 Sport ★★★★★

3.4.19

In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.

8.4 8.3 1405 51.3 -

CLA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus

21.8.19

Nearer the mark to look at but still way wide of it as a driver's car.

6.8 6.1 1555 48.3 -

C300e AMG Line ★★★★★

4.5.22

Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.

5.8 5.1 2005 49.0 48

E220d AMG Line Premium Plus

3.1.24

An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.

7.2 5.9 1917 65.8 -

E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus

19.3.25

Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need.

4.9 4.3 2167 46.1 -

EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus

4.1.23

Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.

6.0 5.5 2386 - 262

EQS 450+ Business Class

7.5.25

Progress has been made, but this limousine still isn't quite the ultimate luxury EV.

5.9 4.9 2608 2.6 248

EQS 450 Business Class SUV

6.3.24

Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.

5.5 5.2 2899 - 265

S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus

6.4.22

Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.

5.2 4.2 2530 37.0 45

EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus

17.11.21

Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.

8.4 7.6 2030 - 200

GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium

16.9.20

Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.

7.4 7.1 1810 55.4 -

EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium

18.5.22

A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.

7.7 6.8 2235 - -

GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium

13.9.23

Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.

6.5 6.0 1929 41.2 -

GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium

12.2.20

Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.

6.5 6.0 2634 38.2 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

G350d AMG Line ★★★★★

17.7.19

Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.

7.5 7.2 2451 31.3 -

G500 AMG Line Premium Plus

25.9.24

Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.

5.1 4.5 - 30.7 -

CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus

13.11.24

Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.

6.1 5.5 2122 37.1 49

MG

3 Hybrid+ Trophy ★★★★★

12.6.24

Good value and with no serious vices but still lacks a final layer of polish.

6.8 6.2 1311 47.9 -

4 EV Long Range SE ★★★★★

5.4.23

Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.

7.1 6.1 1692 - 185

5 SW EV Exclusive ★★★★★

25.11.20

MG's second EV does cheap motoring much better than the first.

8.0 7.1 1538 - 161

ZS Hybrid+ Trophy ★★★★★

22.1.25

Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.

7.6 6.6 1422 41.5 -

MINI

John Cooper Works

14.5.25

A proper hot hatch let down by a stiff ride and an impenetrable user interface.

5.8 4.5 1363 42.0 -

Countryman C Exclusive

17.4.24

Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.

8.7 7.7 1618 46.9 -

Aceman SE Exclusive

8.1.25

Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.

6.8 5.7 1756 3.1 162

MORGAN

Plus Four ★★★★★

12.8.20

Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.

5.1 4.3 1013 54.0 -

Plus Six ★★★★★

10.4.24

The individualist's sports car made better.

4.4 3.3 1188 37.2 -

Super 3 ★★★★★

9.11.22

Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.

6.9 5.9 644 43.5 -

NISSAN

Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna ★★★★★

29.1.20

Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.

11.9 11.8 1256 46.0 -

Qashqai 1.3 DIG-T 158 Tekna

28.7.21

Ticks the important family car boxes but its powertrain frustrates.

10.0 9.3 1412 44.9 -

Ariya 87kWh Evolve ★★★★★

26.10.22

Surprisingly traditional and luxurious but not wholly successful.

8.2 6.4 2109 - -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna

22.2.23

Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.

6.6 6.0 1947 33.8 -

OMODA

5 1.6 TGD Comfort

20.11.24

Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.

7.4 6.3 1474 38.2 -

PEUGEOT

e-208 Allure Premium

6.5.20

Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV

- - 1455 38.2 -

308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT ★★★★★ 25.5.22

A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.

9.5 9.2 1358 55.3 -

408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8 ★★★★★ 11.10.23

Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.

8.2 7.3 1746 42.1 40

508 BlueHdi 180 S&S GT Auto

24.10.18

Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.

8.8 8.5 1671 52.0 -

508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8

8.7.20

This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.

- - 1720 - -

TOP 3 BEST SPORTS CARS



1 Alpine A110



2 Porsche 911



3 Mazda MX-5

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10



0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
508 SW Hybrid4 PSE ★★★★★ 5.5.21				
Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.				
5.7	4.7	1892	44.0	-

e-2008 GT Line ★★★★★ 30.9.20				
Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.				
9.5	8.9	1638	-	-

3008 1.6 BlueHdi 120 GT Line ★★★★★ 18.1.17				
In challenging company, the 3008 promises more than it delivers.				
12.0	12.1	1300	53.2	-

e-3008 73kWh Allure ★★★★★ 4.8.24				
Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.				
8.5	7.1	2132	-	219

5008 Hybrid 136 GT ★★★★★ 12.2.25				
Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.				
9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	-

POLESTAR				
2BST Edition 270 ★★★★★ 12.4.23				
A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.				
4.5	3.4	2161	-	188

3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition ★★★★★ 12.2.25				
Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.				
4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235

PORSCHE				
718 Boxster ★★★★★ 8.6.16				
Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.				
5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
718 Cayman S ★★★★★ 10.8.16				
Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.				
4.8	3.9	1430	-	-

718 Spyder ★★★★★ 1.4.20				
Spyder's flat six rectifies most, if not quite all, of the 718's shortcomings.				
4.3	3.5	1350	30.1	-

718 Cayman GT4 RS ★★★★★ 14.9.22				
A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.				
3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-

911 GT3 PDK ★★★★★ 11.8.21				
Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.				
3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-

911 Turbo S ★★★★★ 10.8.22				
Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.				
2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-

911 Carrera T ★★★★★ 30.8.23				
Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.				
4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-

911 GT3 RS ★★★★★ 22.11.23				
Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.				
3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-

911 Dakar ★★★★★ 10.1.24				
Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.				
3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-

911 S/T ★★★★★ 3.7.24				
Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.				
3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-

911 Carrera GTS ★★★★★ 5.3.25				
Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.				
2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-

Macan Turbo ★★★★★ 4.6.14				
Luxury SUV meets sports car in a compact, well-priced package.				
4.7	4.3	2050	30.9	-

Macan Turbo Electric ★★★★★ 19.2.25				
Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.				
3.0	2.5	-	2.1	219

Cayenne S ★★★★★ 21.2.24				
Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.				
5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-

Cayenne Turbo ★★★★★ 5.9.18				
As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.				
3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-

Cayenne Turbo SE-Hybrid ★★★★★ 27.5.20				
Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.				
-	-	2490	-	-

Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé ★★★★★ 20.7.22				
Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster - but a likeable one.				
3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-

Panamera 4 E-Hybrid ★★★★★ 22.1.25				
Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.				
3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Taycan Turbo S ★★★★★ 30.10.24				
Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.				
2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233

RENAULT				
Clío TCe100 Iconic ★★★★★ 27.11.19				
Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.				
11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-

5 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic Five ★★★★★ 12.3.25				
Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.				
7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166

Megane E-Tech Techno ★★★★★ 23.11.22				
Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.				
6.9	5.4	1688	-	198

Captur TCe130 S-Edition EDC ★★★★★ 18.3.20				
Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.				
9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-

Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition ★★★★★ 13.10.21				
Eminently sensible but unspectacular.				
11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-

Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range ★★★★★ 26.6.24				
The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.				
8.1	6.3	1916	-	313

Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine ★★★★★ 19.7.23				
Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.				
8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-

ROLLS-ROYCE				
Ghost ★★★★★ 13.1.21				
Most technologically advanced Rolls-Royce is an exceptional limo.				
4.7	3.8	2490	28.5	-

Phantom ★★★★★ 4.4.18				
The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.				
5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-

Spectre ★★★★★ 20.12.23				
Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.				
4.1	3.1	2935	-	245

Cullinan Black Badge ★★★★★ 19.2.20				
Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.				
4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-

SEAT				
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology ★★★★★ 19.7.17				
Grown-up supermini shows its rivals how it's done - in most respects.				
10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-

Leon eHybrid FR ★★★★★ 2.12.20				
Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.				
7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26

Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology ★★★★★ 15.11.17				
Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.				
10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-

Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG ★★★★★ 25.10.23				
Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.				
8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-

0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
SKODA				
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort ★★★★★ 9.2.22				
Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.				
9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-

Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG ★★★★★ 31.7.19				
Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.				
7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-

Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SEL First Edition Estate DSG ★★★★★ 2.9.20				
Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.				
8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-

Octavia Estate vRS ★★★★★ 29.1.25				
A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.				
5.9	4.8	-	37.6	-

Superb SEL 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate ★★★★★ 17.7.24				
The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.				
8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-

Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout ★★★★★ 30.1.19				
Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.				
8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-

Elroq 85 Edition ★★★★★ 19.3.25				
Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV.				
6.1	5.0	2085	3.5	246

Enyaq iV 80 Lounge ★★★★★ 18.8.21				
Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.				
8.3	7.8	2098	-	262

SMART				
#1 Premium ★★★★★ 8.11.23				
Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.				
5.6	4.6	1861	-	229

#3 Premium ★★★★★ 15.5.24				
Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.				
5.7	4.9	1832	-	205

SUBARU				
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring ★★★★★ 28.2.24				
Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.				
10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Model 3 Long Range ★★★★★ 14.2.24
Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.
4.4 3.4 1846 - 277

Model Y Long Range AWD ★★★★★ 23.3.22
A far better electric car than a premium SUV.
4.7 3.6 1978 - 234

Model S P90D ★★★★★ 20.4.16
Great EV, intriguing driver's car. Not quite the perfect luxury GT.
3.5 3.0 2220 - 214

Model S Plaid ★★★★★ 2.8.23
Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.
2.4 1.7 2220 - 301

Model X 90D ★★★★★ 15.2.17
High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.
5.2 4.2 2508 - 147

TOYOTA

Aygo X Limited Edition ★★★★★ 11.5.22
A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.
15.6 16.5 974 58.7 -

Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design ★★★★★ 23.9.20
Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.
9.2 8.8 1140 65.0 -

GR Yaris Circuit Pack ★★★★★ 3.3.21
Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.
5.2 5.0 1283 39.2 -

Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports ★★★★★ 5.6.19
A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.
8.5 7.7 1537 52.6 -

Prius Plug-in Design ★★★★★ 23.4.25
Better late than never for best Prius to date.
6.6 5.6 1542 56.1 46

bZ4X AWD Vision ★★★★★ 18.1.23
A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.
6.4 5.9 2023 - 208

Land Cruiser 2.8 D-4D 204 Invincible ★★★★★ 21.5.25
Remains supremely tough but now has added kerb appeal and drivability.
10.3 10.3 2503 30.7 -

Mirai Design Premium ★★★★★ 16.6.21
Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.
8.7 8.3 1937 - -

GR Supra Pro ★★★★★ 14.8.19
Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.
4.4 3.6 1495 39.0 -

Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport ★★★★★ 1.3.23
Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.
10.0 9.5 2241 32.5 -

VAUXHALL

Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto ★★★★★ 22.1.20
Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.
11.2 11.5 1171 51.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line ★★★★★ 5.10.22
Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.
9.9 9.2 1304 55.3 -

Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite ★★★★★ 7.6.17
Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.
9.8 10.3 1278 54.2 -

Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto ★★★★★ 12.5.21
The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.
9.3 9.1 1238 48.6 -

Grandland X Hybrid4 Ultimate Nav ★★★★★ 22.4.20
Inspires big expectations and delivers few, but it's an interesting fleet option.
- - 1800 - -

Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy ★★★★★ 27.12.18
Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.
14.7 16.2 1552 60.1 -

VOLKSWAGEN

Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE ★★★★★ 31.1.18
Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.
10.7 11.2 1145 57.1 -

Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+ ★★★★★ 1.8.18
A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.
6.7 5.9 1342 46.8 -

Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG ★★★★★ 22.7.20
Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.
8.3 7.8 1330 60.0 -

Golf 1.5 eHybrid Style ★★★★★ 23.10.24
New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.
7.2 6.1 1619 46.5 -

Golf GTI ★★★★★ 25.9.24
'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.
5.3 4.4 - 47.2 -

Golf R ★★★★★ 14.4.21
Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet - for a price.
4.4 3.7 1520 43.9 -

ID 3 Pro Performance Life ★★★★★ 31.3.21
Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.
7.0 6.5 1757 - 145

Arteon 2.0 BiTDI 240PS 4Motion R-Line ★★★★★ 27.9.17
Considered approach produces an executive flagship short on sparkle.
6.5 6.2 1866 55.6 -

Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake ★★★★★ 9.6.21
Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.
7.1 6.0 1783 52.5 -

ID 7 Pro Match ★★★★★ 13.3.24
Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.
6.1 5.1 2162 - 239

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG ★★★★★ 24.1.18
Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.
6.7 6.5 1534 37.5 -

T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG ★★★★★ 10.6.20
It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.
- - 1540 - -

Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line ★★★★★ 22.5.24
Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.
9.4 9.2 1606 44.9 -

ID 4 GTX Max ★★★★★ 27.10.21
GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.
6.2 5.6 2220 - 200

Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech ★★★★★ 8.8.18
An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.
7.2 6.6 2292 41.6 -

Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance ★★★★★ 5.6.24
It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.
6.2 5.7 2446 34.1 26

Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG ★★★★★ 3.2.16
A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder - albeit a slightly bland one.
9.9 9.7 1666 - -

Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style ★★★★★ 8.3.23
Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.
8.4 7.1 2243 37.9 14

ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro ★★★★★ 8.2.23
It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.
9.5 9.1 2498 - 185

Grand California 600 ★★★★★ 2.1.20
Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.
15.8 16.7 3095 28.5 -

Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB ★★★★★ 30.3.22
Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.
9.1 9.0 2108 39.1 -

Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance ★★★★★ 13.11.24
Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sister car.
7.2 6.4 1836 44.5 73

VOLVO

EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus ★★★★★ 1.5.24
Not enough key strengths - and not enough Volvo pragmatism.
5.7 5.1 1779 - 179

C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate ★★★★★ 13.4.22
A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.
4.4 3.6 2172 - 194

XC40 D4 AWD First Edition ★★★★★ 7.2.18
Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger brothers, if not better.
8.5 8.5 1735 43.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

XC60 D4 AWD R-Design ★★★★★ 5.7.17
A very impressive at the right time but lacking the right dynamic finish.
8.9 8.9 1836 48.9 -

XC90 D5 AWD Momentum ★★★★★ 17.6.15
A very impressive all-rounder with its own distinctive appeal.
8.3 8.3 2076 - -

V60 D4 Momentum Pro Auto ★★★★★ 27.6.18
Fine-looking, capable and practical estate with only a few demerits.
8.9 8.3 1669 43.1 -

V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design ★★★★★ 21.9.22
Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.
4.9 4.3 2036 38.0 51

V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design ★★★★★ 11.11.20
Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.
5.6 4.9 2109 41.9 -

XPENG

G6 RWD Standard Range ★★★★★ 26.2.25
Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.
6.8 6.2 2067 3.3 208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN



Polestar 5 September
British-engineered super-saloon has up to 974bhp and radical new fast-charging tech.



MG Cyberster 2+2 October
Hard-top version of electric roadster should land in time for 60th anniversary of MGB GT.



Jeep Compass Autumn
C-SUV uses same new platform as Peugeot e-3008 and offers petrol, hybrid or electric power.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST



Why I love...

RICHARD BURNS



BY SAM PHILLIPS

If I were to ask everyone in the office to name their favourite rally driver, I'd put money on names like Röhrl, Kankkunen, Sainz, Mäkinen and McRae being thrown about. Indeed, these hotshoes all have the stats to prove their endless driving talent. But for me there's one that deserves to stand head and shoulders clear of the rest: Richard Burns.

Here was a name that was, ahem, burned into my brain early on, when my parents bought me a pair of radio-controlled rally cars: a Subaru Impreza WRC and a Peugeot 206 WRC, each with the names of Burns and his co-driver Robert Reid affixed prominently to the rear window.

I'd regularly get them out and attempt to drift them across the conservatory, laminate flooring being surprisingly good for perfecting the art. It was the blue and yellow Scooby that stood out to me, and watching Petter Solberg pilot his life-size version over huge crests and between trees on television set the foundations for a love of rallying from an early age.

My true appreciation for Berkshire-born Burns came later, when I stumbled across his excellent autobiography, *Driving Ambition*, which tracks his rise to prominence from the Peugeot Challenge series, which helped launch the careers of many great drivers.

My godfather used to compete in the Peugeot Challenge in his 1.6-litre 205 alongside Burns (who was in the big-boy 1.9-litre car) and my dad was part of the service crew. He once recounted a story of Burns from the Circuit des Ardennes rally back in 1991: not only did he win the event, but he was fastest on most of the stages and was easy to spot during the night because his brakes

The 2001 WRC champion was silky-smooth, even in environments like this



“He was so relaxed that he'd sometimes steer with one hand”

were glowing orange, such was his commitment.

Burns would go on to become the youngest-ever British Rally Champion and eventually a World Rally Champion in 2001 with Subaru – an incredible achievement, considering that he was behind the likes of Colin McRae and Tommi Mäkinen heading into the final round in Wales. Cool, calm and collected, Burns kept his Impreza on the road while McRae crashed out and Mäkinen retired from the event early on.

As of today, Burns remains the only English

driver to win the WRC title.

You only need to watch on-board footage of Burns to gauge how talented and supremely fast he was at the helm of a rally car. His smooth driving style coupled with Reid's detailed pace notes allowed him to paint a clear picture of the stage ahead. He was so relaxed that he would sometimes even steer with one hand.

Burns' move to Peugeot after his title victory didn't go according to plan, and a return to Subaru was on the cards for 2004, but sadly I never got to see him race in blue and yellow. Burns was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2003 and succumbed to his illness two years later at the age of just 34.

I will never get to meet my rallying hero, then, but his legacy lives on 20 years after his passing. What a man. What a talent. What a driver.



Burns won 10 rallies across his six full WRC campaigns

What we did this week



PLUG AND PLAY

Office productivity took a dip when Nissan's Formula E team launched Nismo Electric Racer

Tokyo (nismoelectricracer.com), an online racing game mixing electric single-seaters with classic 1990s gameplay and design.

It has shades of Pole Position and Out Run: use Z to accelerate and the arrow keys to steer. Genuinely difficult. Stupidly addictive.

JAMES ATTWOOD



ANYWAY, HERE'S WONDERWALL

The new Hyundai Inster has a small string pocket on the door for storing things like your phone or

wallet, but I found myself using it to replicate my favourite guitar riffs. I fear a door pocket riff-off with the BYD Atto 3 is on the cards. What's that Deep Purple song called again?

SAM PHILLIPS



SOMEWHERE ROVER THE RAINBOW

Remember when

MG Rover went absolutely wild and offered the 75 in colours like this – named Bittersweet – from the factory? Apparently they cost north of £2000 in period, yet a few buyers still went for them, as evidenced by this striking duo that brightened up a stop at Hopwood Park services. I want one.

CHARLIE MARTIN



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